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Indyk: US ready for dialogue with Iran

By DAVID RUDGE

The US is ready for a dialogue with Iran, particularly if the results of the recent elections represent a change in its recent radical policy, US Ambassador Martin Indyk said yesterday.

He stressed, however, that it is still too early to say whether the election of Mohammed Khatami as president indicates a moderating of Iran's previously radical stance.

"The US has made it clear repeatedly that we have nothing against the Islamic government in Iran," he said, prior to

being presented with the Haifa University's humanitarian award of merit. He was cited for his commitment and contribution to furthering the peace process and strengthening ties between Israel and the US.

"It's Iran's behavior, particularly its opposition to the peace process, its support for terrorism, and its attempts to acquire weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons and long-range missiles — it's those kinds of activities which are of concern to us.

"We have said before that we are ready for a dialogue with the govern-

ment of Iran. That has been our long-standing position and there's nothing new in that.

"But, beyond that, we will have to wait and see whether the election of President Khatami represents an interest on the part of Iran in changing the behavior that is so troubling to us. If that in fact is the case, then I think we would welcome that."

Indyk also spoke about moving forward the peace process with Syria.

"Certainly our objective is to achieve a comprehensive peace, which means not just a peace agreement between Israel

and the Palestinians, but also agreements between Israel, Syria and Lebanon," he said.

"It is very much in our interest, therefore, to see that process move forward, and I think we share that view with both Israel and Syria.

"The problem is how to do it and that is proving very difficult, but we will continue to work on this. Syria continues to express an interest in resuming the negotiations, as does Israel.

"I hope that if we can succeed in getting the Palestinian process back on track, we will also succeed in getting the

Syrian and Lebanese negotiations restarted as well," he said.

Indyk issued a clear warning that the peace process will move backward and all achievements made so far will be undermined if no progress is made.

"We are concerned about that and we are sending out a warning signal about that, but we are also saying that the parties have to recognize their responsibilities," he said.

On the Mubarak-Netanyahu summit he said, "I think it is very important that President Mubarak has decided to step in at this moment and lend his

good offices to try and put this process back on track.

"We are in close contact with Egypt and Israel about this initiative and as I have said before we will be ready to re-engage to follow it up," Indyk said, "but I emphasize again that we cannot do it for the parties. They are the ones that have to take the initiative.

"Egypt has a very important role to play both as the country that first made peace with Israel and led the Arab world to peace with Israel and as the most important and influential country in the Arab world," he said.

Cable TV providers refusing to hook up some areas

By JUDY SIEGEL

Cable TV companies are demanding tens of thousands of shekels from would-be subscribers in urban and outlying areas or are completely refusing to supply service, even though they are required by law to connect all those who ask for the service.

Zvi Hauser, an adviser to Communications Minister Limor Livnat, said last night that the ministry has recognized the matter as serious and deserving of attention.

"We're spending much effort to find ways to resolve the problem," he said. "One of the answers would be the supply of multi-channel TV to everyone via satellite, in competition with the cable companies. Such a possibility has been approved in principle by the government, but its implementation will require legislation."

Among those whose applications for cable service have been rejected or conditioned on the "sharing" of expenses are residents of predominantly haredi areas or Arab villages — and big-city firms like Channel 2 and The Jerusalem Post.

Arutzei Zahav, the monopoly supplying cable service in the Jerusalem area, has demanded NIS 16,000 from Channel 2, located on Rehov Kanfei Nesharian, near its Jerusalem building. The Jerusalem Post, situated a block away from Bezeq headquarters and three blocks from Channel 1 and Israel Radio (which have cable), has been asked to pay NIS 22,582 to get hooked up.

It argued that the Post's neighborhood is a combined industrial and increasingly haredi residential area where demand is negligible.

Huli Raz, Arutzei Zahav's Jerusalem regional director, asked the Communications Ministry's exceptions committee re-established two years ago to approve the special fees. Chairman Hanan Elstein turned down these requests, saying they were unreasonable.

National religious and secular residents of Jerusalem's Beit Yisrael, Har Nof, city center, and Rehov Bar-Ilan areas have also been turned down, because only a handful of people have requested cable.

Michael Raphaeli, chairman of the Israel Cable Council, said it is highly unreasonable for cable companies to demand extraordinary fees for hooking up individuals in urban areas.

Would-be customers could sue the cable companies, but such suits could take years.

In the meantime, the solution could be the provision of multi-channel television by satellite.

"The cable companies themselves want exclusive rights to provide the channels to subscribers in peripheral areas via satellite, but we want other companies to do this and introduce competition," Raphaeli insisted.

Moshe Ronen, managing director of Arutzei Zahav, did not respond to a request for a comment.



IDF pays tribute
 Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak (left) and Brig.-Gen. Shmuel Zucker lay a wreath yesterday at the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

France's Juppe to resign soon

News agencies

PARIS — French Prime Minister Alain Juppe said yesterday he would resign whatever the outcome of next Sunday's parliamentary election runoff. President Jacques Chirac will make a radio and television broadcast to the nation tonight, his office announced immediately after Juppe's statement.

Juppe made his decision after the Socialist-led opposition strongly outpolled his center-right coalition in Sunday's first round of voting, raising the prospect of an upset left-wing victory in the decisive second round.

Juppe's record unpopularity among voters, combined with record unemployment, made him the left's biggest target and the first fall guy in the election.

As Chirac's loyal lieutenant,

Juppe dutifully carried out the belt-tightening policies — his boss called for, while he struggled with strikes, social unrest, scandals, and dismal poll ratings.

After the first-round vote in which the left stunned the right by taking the lead, Chirac and Juppe agreed it was time to rob the left of its chief target before the runoff. Juppe had to go.

While a brilliant technocrat, Juppe, 51, had trouble winning the hearts of the French with his book-

aloof style. He became the most unpopular prime minister since the 1950s, with an approval rating dipping as low as 21 percent.

That weakened his hand in pushing through austerity reforms aimed at cutting France's budget deficit to match criteria to enter a European single currency, the euro, by 1999.

The so-called "Juppe Plan" to streamline France's costly public welfare system sparked a wave of strikes that brought much of France

to a halt in late 1995 and have persisted on and off since that time.

Juppe promised the French a "new beginning," including a new jobs for the millions of unemployed, when he was appointed premier by Chirac in May 1995.

Two years later, he talked of "real change," while the jobless rate hovered at a post-war record 12.8 percent. The opposition has not let that fact slip by unremarked.

He has also been undermined by personal corruption scandals.

The media revealed that his son was living in a city-owned apartment for exceptionally low rent and that he had renovated his own apartment on council expenses when he was Paris finance director from 1989-1993. Both son and prime minister were forced to move houses after a public outcry in 1995.



Alain Juppe

PA official: Israel lacing gum with aphrodisiac

By JON IMMANUEL

Israel is sending chewing gum laced with aphrodisiacs to the Palestinian Authority, a PA official charged in a daily newspaper yesterday.

Saleh Abdulfal, director of the inspection department of the PA Ministry of Supplies, said that laboratory tests made on seven brands of Israeli gum smuggled into the West Bank and Gaza showed they contain a sexually stimulating adrenaline substance.

Harav al-Jazeera, the newspaper closest to PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, quoted Abdulfal as saying some wholesalers have been arrested and may be tried for bringing the gum and loading food into PA-controlled territory.

"If these allegations were not so ridiculous, they would be very funny," Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Barak said last night.

The charge that Israeli manufactured and exported sexually stimulating gum first surfaced

among Islamic militants in Egypt 140 years ago. The stories became the basis for accusations in the Cairo press that Israel was exporting its depraved moral standards to Egypt to weaken its youth.

In February, the Supplies Ministry was the focus of the most serious scandal to be made public since the PA took office. It involved the sale of flour which had passed its expiry date with fake stamps indicating it was fresh. The flour was allegedly repackaged in Israel.

Journalist probed under warning

Channel 1 commentator Amnon Abramovitch was questioned under caution by police yesterday, after he declined to reveal his source for the story that Avishai Raviv was a General Security Service agent.

Abramovitch, who revealed his questioning on Channel 1's *Mabar* news last night, said the investigation was begun several months ago.

"During the investigation, staffers at the Justice Ministry, State Attorney's Office, GSS, and police were questioned," he said. "I was questioned twice and this morning I was questioned under caution."

PM: No Har Homa deals

By MICHAL YUDELMAN

Israel hopes Egypt will produce a solution at today's Sharm e-Sheikh summit that will bring the Palestinians back to the negotiating table without a construction halt at Har Homa, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu told *The Jerusalem Post* last night.

Netanyahu stated he has no intention of stopping the building work, saying it is part of the government's policy of preventing the redrawing of Jerusalem and ensuring there is no return to the 1967 borders.

Newsline, Page 2

Despite low expectations for a turning point, Jerusalem sources estimated that Netanyahu will make some gesture or concession to the Palestinians at the summit. This may involve a temporary construction halt at Har Homa, stopping land expropriation in the West Bank, or the scope of the second pullback.

The sources pointed out that both leaders know they have to compromise to save the peace process. Mubarak would not risk going ahead with the summit unless he had received assurances

of some compromise that would enable jump-starting the stalled peace process, they said.

They pointed to the fact that Mubarak's adviser, Osama el-Baz, remained in Israel for a second day yesterday, meeting with Foreign Minister David Levy and Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, as an indication that some kind of agreement was reached.

Channel 1 reported last night that Netanyahu will demand a meeting with Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat at today's summit.

As part of the preparations for the summit, a source said, Steve Cohen, president of the Montreal-based Institute for Middle East Peace, has been shuttling between Cairo and Jerusalem, delivering messages between the two leaders.

An Israeli advance team went to Sharm e-Sheikh's Movenpick Hotel yesterday to complete the preparations for the summit, which has expanded to include Levy and possibly his Egyptian counterpart, Amr Moussa. Netanyahu held intensive consultations with Levy and Mordechai, after which the latter said he is not aware Israel was requested to make any gesture toward the Palestinians.

See SUMMIT, Page 2

No-confidence motions fail

By LIAT COLLINS

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu survived two no-confidence motions by a vote of 34-47 yesterday, with an abstention by Benny Elon (MoleDET).

Labor filed a motion on the breakdown of the peace process and what it described as the isolation of Israel in the international arena. Meretz and Hadash added to the crisis in the local authorities.

Shlomo Ben-Ami, a candidate for the Labor Party leadership, presented his faction's motion with a scorching attack on Netanyahu. He said there is only a small chance of success for today's summit between Netanyahu and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and said the country is, in effect, leaderless.

"Instead of a prime minister, we have a media man who chases after every possible media effect wherever he can appear in the press," Ben-Ami said. "There's no strategy. No peace policy. And no social policy. It's a government of continuing incitement against the rule of good public administration and law."

Communications Minister Limor Livnat, who answered for the government, said the summit would take place as planned, without any preconditions. "We believe this is the first step in the resumption of the diplomatic

reports about there being preconditions are unfounded. We will continue the negotiations with the same red lines that we have set out."

Salah Salim (Hadash), presenting his faction's motion, claimed that in its first year in power, the government "has succeeded in spreading destruction in all fields, from the diplomatic and economic to the difficult situation of the local authorities."

Finance Minister Dan Meridor, in his response, noted the serious deviations from the budget by many of the local authorities. He said the question is not only how to close the deficit but how to ensure it does not recur.

Later in the evening the Knesset voted to accept the policy statement presented by Netanyahu last week. The statement, a motion of confidence in the premier, passed 48 to 34. Elon abstained.

In a departure from usual practice, The Third Way submitted its own proposed concluding statement, separate from the rest of the coalition. It called for the government to immediately act to resume the negotiations with the Palestinians. It also called on the government to set opposition to try to create a broad national consensus on the guiding principles behind the permanent arrangements.



مكتبة الاصل

Knesset blasts haredi flag burning

By LIAT COLLINS

Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon opened yesterday's plenum session by condemning the flag burning by haredim on Lag Ba'omer.

few are becoming a phenomenon, and if we don't wake up and issue a warning now and get rid of this phenomenon, we could find that we have woken up too late.

The plenum heard several urgent motions to the agenda on the subject. Shas leader Aryeh Deri, in an unusual appearance in the plenum, said he was "embarrassed and ashamed" by the flag burning and the Remembrance Day incidents.

"Every community has its margins," he said, adding that there is incitement against the haredim which could lead to violence

by the secular.

He showed the MKs a copy of a cartoon which appeared in *Ma'ariv's* youth magazine recently, which showed the national flag drawn on a bare backside. And he debunked the recent report of a haredi family holding a barbecue on Remembrance Day on top of the memorial at Jerusalem's Ammunition Hill. He said subsequent investigation showed that the picture was taken during the Mimouna festivities, and that the head of the family is an IDF veteran who fought in the Six Day War.

been set up to investigate the flag burning and is expected to find the offenders within a few weeks. He noted that after the Remembrance Day events a delegation of haredim came to apologize on behalf of the community and to promise to help find the guilty.

The Labor Party faction also discussed the flag burning at its weekly meeting. Labor Secretary-General Nissim Zivliti called the act "the height of political barbarity." Haggai Merom accused Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu of backing the haredim, despite his condemnations of the flag burning.

Palestinian human rights group attacks PA

By JON IMMANUEL

A Palestinian human rights group yesterday accused the Palestinian Authority of human rights violations and introduced relatives of some of the victims at a press conference.

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group investigated 42 cases. Included in a 27-page report, called "The State of Human Rights in Palestine," was the charge that different PA security forces use torture to extract confessions, even when there is clear evidence that the tortured man could not have committed the crime of which he was accused.

In one case, a group of nine men were arrested in Khader, near Bethlehem, in last May and charged with several murders, including that of a man who was killed in October 1993.

Nabil Salah, one of the accused, was forced to confess to the murder, even though he had documentary proof from the International Committee of the Red Cross that he was in jail in Israel from 1991 to 1994.

Some of the nine were also accused of murdering another man for whose death the IDF had officially claimed responsibility. Bassem Eid, director of the PHRMG, who worked for the Israeli group B'tselem at the time, took testimony showing that the

man was killed by an IDF undercover unit.

In February Justice Minister Froih Abu Medein said that the men would all be released within 48 hours, but they remain in Jericho jail.

One of the arrested men reported to relatives that during three months of interrogation, "they forced my head into a toilet and forced me to drink from it."

Another was stripped naked in the office of Col. Washidi, of Bethlehem military intelligence, "where they tried to rape me, but my screams prevented them. They inserted a baton into my rectum. At that moment I signed the confession."

Whipping with electric cables, being locked in a closet for days, being tied in painful positions are also common.

"The authority is not set in its ways, but goes back and forward," Eid said. Journalists, he noted, "have been relatively safe since the beginning of the year, until last week," when Jerusalem journalist Daoud Kutab was arrested.

"The frequency of torture is less than before. But maybe the victims are afraid to file complaints," he said.

PA Attorney-General Khalid al-Qidrah responded to the report on Israel Radio's Arabic service. He denied there is systematic torture, "only individual acts," and accused Eid of "lies."

Jerusalem's Jewish growth rate dropping

By ELLI WOHLGELERITER

Slowly but steadily, the overall rate of growth of the Jewish population in Jerusalem is decreasing each year, and projection statistics published yesterday indicate that by the year 2010, the Arab population in the city will be 31 percent.

The overall population in Jerusalem at the end of 1996 stood at 603,000, of which 422,300, or 70%, were Jews. The overall population grew 139% since the Six Day War, with Jews growing by 114%, and Arabs by 163%. The average Jewish household has 3.6 people, while the average Arab household has 5.4 people.

These and many other facts and figures on the city were released yesterday by the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies, in its annual *Statistical Yearbook*.

Projected figures for the year 2010 show a population of 817,500, with 251,000 Arabs and 214,000 haredim. The haredim will make up 38% of the Jewish population, and 26% of the overall population.

While the Arab population difference is only 1% between today's figure and 2010, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert said he was concerned with the growth rate of the city's Arab population.

"There is a danger that the changing proportions of Jews and Arabs in this city will add to the already strained relations between the two groups, and this worries me," he said at a news conference. Since the reunification of the city in 1967, the Jewish population decreased from 74.2% to 70.5%, as of 1995. At that time,



Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert reviews the Jerusalem Institute for Israeli Studies' annual 'Statistical Yearbook' with the help of its editor, Dr. Maya Choshen, at a press conference yesterday.

55% of the city's population lived in areas that were added to the city after the 1967 war, and of this group 48% are Jews.

Although the statistics show, not surprisingly, an increase in the birth rate of haredi families, Olmert said that projected figures estimate "that in the year 2010, over 62% of the Jewish population will be non-haredi, which is assur-

ing that the days when the haredim will take over the city of Jerusalem are far off. Of course it will depend on the number of new immigrants that will come to Jerusalem that will affect the proportions. Jerusalem has apparently lost favor among new immigrants, however. Only 5,000 who came here in 1995 chose to live in Jerusalem, compared with 8,000 in

1991. If that trend continues, then the demographic trend can best be seen in the classroom: There are 156,000 schoolchildren in the city, with 50% in grades 1-6 studying in haredi institutions. Among kindergarten pupils, 61% are haredi.

The one thing that surprised Olmert was the decline in the

number of people leaving the city of Jerusalem. This is encouraging, and reflects the efforts we are making to stop the immigration out of the city. Jerusalem is also a poor city, with 37% of the children living below the poverty line in 1995, compared with 23.2% for all of Israel. 16.8% in Tel Aviv, 13.1% in Petah Tikva and 46.1% in Bnei Brak.

IAF hits terrorists in south Lebanon

Hizbullah shells SLA position

By DAVID RUDGE

The IAF blasted Hizbullah targets in south Lebanon yesterday, following a roadside bomb attack in which two South Lebanese Army soldiers were wounded.

The IDF Spokesman said the pilots reported direct hits and that all planes returned safely to their bases.

Reports from Lebanon said the planes fired a number of rockets at Hizbullah targets. There were no immediate reports of

any Hizbullah casualties.

In a separate incident yesterday evening, Hizbullah gunmen fired several mortar rounds at a SLA position in the western sector of the security zone. There were no casualties and IDF and gunners returned fire.

Meanwhile, Hizbullah has made no official comment on the results of the Iranian elections. The organization, which is financed and armed by Iran, has so far not sent a message of congratulations to new President Mohammed Khatami.

Three killed on roads

One person was killed and two were injured - one seriously, the other moderately - in an accident near Mishor Adumim last night. The injured were taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah University Hospital at Ein Kerem.

A 23-year-old Arab man was killed when he crashed his motorcycle head on into a car near the

Haifa airport yesterday afternoon.

On Tuesday night, an eight-year-old Majd el-Kurum boy was killed when he ran across a street at the entrance to the village and was hit by a car.

Police, meanwhile, are seeking witnesses to the hit-and-run killing of a pedestrian, an 82-year-old woman, in Ramle on March 23, at 8 p.m. (Iim)

Police: No plan to close Arutz 7

Police yesterday denied reports of plans to shut down the pirate radio station Arutz 7, saying an investigation is under way into the activities of all pirate stations.

Uzi Sandor, assistant to the Israel Police spokesman, said police are collecting information on Arutz 7's activities but at present there are no plans to question the radio station's personnel.

"Some stations that were closed in the past have renewed their activities," he said.

The current outcry regarding Arutz 7, identified with the settler movement, came in response to an article in last Friday's *Ma'ariv* that said police planned to shut down the station.

SUMMIT

Continued from Page 1

Netanyahu's entourage will include his political adviser Uri Arad and Dorit Golan, who is UN ambassador-designate, senior policy adviser David Ben-Gurion, cabinet secretary Danny Navon, and attorney Yitzhak Meltzer.

Netanyahu and Mubarak are scheduled to meet at the hotel at 11 a.m. give a joint press conference at about 1 p.m. then have lunch together.

Arafat yesterday traveled to Cairo to coordinate positions with Mubarak. He has reportedly asked Mubarak to make the Palestinian demand of halting the settlement in Har Homa clear at the meeting.

Meanwhile, Labor Party leader Shimon Peres told the weekly Labor faction meeting that he believes Netanyahu will try to find a formula to resume negotiations with Sharm el-Sheikh, but that Mubarak will not agree to anything without consulting with the Palestinians.

"But we don't want to be seen as when all's said and done, one of the Arab states would be made to feel the threat of war but not being included in the international community."

Reports that Netanyahu is planning to freeze the settlement in Har Homa buildings in eastern Jerusalem were rebutted yesterday by Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, who said emphatically that this is not the prime minister's intention.

"We will enforce the law, but we do all the time," Olmert said. "There is no change."

Asked whether the summit might result in a construction freeze at Har Homa, Olmert said, "The answer is definitely no. We will not agree under any condition, no matter what, the building in Har Homa will continue. It is unstoppable."

Jewish settlers near Netanyahu may agree to freezing the expansion of settlements in order to resume the peace talks, Yehiel Leiter of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, said settlement leaders believe Netanyahu will not agree to a freeze. "If he does, there will be no coalition," he said.

In an interview on Arutz 7, Milder Party leader Rehavim Zelevani said he is disappointed in Netanyahu, because he has not been able to withstand Palestinian demands. "After keeping track of the prime minister for the past year," he said, "I know that basically he is good at making speeches and flexing muscles, but when it comes down to it, he gives in."

Zelevani added he is pessimistic about the summit, but that, if it will lead to further negotiations.

He also mentioned the fact that when meeting with Mubarak, Israeli prime ministers use always made to travel to Egypt. "Why wasn't the meeting held in Har Homa?" he asked. "If Mubarak wishes to come to Jerusalem, then why not meet in Nitzana or BeerSheva?"

By agreeing to meet on Egyptian soil, the government starts out in an inferior position, he said.

Liav Collins, Elli Wohlgeleitner, and Margot Dudkevitch contributed to this report.

NEWSLINE

With Dr. Yoram Meital, of Ben-Gurion University, an expert on Egyptian affairs

By DAVID RUDGE

What is Egypt trying to achieve by initiating this summit meeting between President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu?

The Egyptian initiative is taking place against the background of the deep freeze in the peace process. The aim is to try to create a new momentum which will help break the ice and, hopefully, restart the process by talking at the highest levels, as well as at the working level between the respective Egyptian, Palestinian, and Israeli advisers. They are doing this although there are many in Egypt who believe that the present Israeli government prefers maintaining the status quo, which amounts to a freeze.

Is Egypt stepping into the vacuum created by the deadlock in the peace process and what has been viewed as ineffectual US efforts to get the sides back to the negotiating table?

The Egyptians are trying to present this initiative as an alternative to the non-existent talks, and as an alternative to the indecisive shuttle diplomacy of US mediators. It is also an alternative to what is happening in the Arab arena, particularly the efforts by Syria to call for an Arab summit at which it would like to see tough decisions taken against any normalization of ties between Israel and Arab countries.

The Egyptians are saying that it is not the right time to convene an Arab summit, nor to start playing hard ball with Israel.

Is this also an attempt to negate recent Israeli statements about Egypt's negative role in the peace process?

The Egyptians are also trying to appeal to public opinion in the US and the West generally, as well as in Israel. They believe that this initiative by President Mubarak should be perceived by all as proof of the positive role that Egypt is playing in the peace process.

The Egyptians have been listening closely to the comments coming from the government here. Now they are saying to Israelis and the world in general

that they are committed to the peace process and that they are trying to be supportive.

Why is Egypt adopting this stance, given internal opposition to the peace accord with Israel, which has apparently grown because of the deadlock, as well as the attitude of other some other Arab countries, particularly Syria?

The Egyptians have come to the conclusion that the present Israeli government will serve out its full term and that this is the government they have to work with. It should be understood that Egypt has a lot to lose if the peace process were to remain deadlocked or fail completely.

What are Egypt's expectations from the summit?

They would like to see this summit as a first step of what could develop into another chain of steps to rescue the peace process. They expect the summit to create a new atmosphere, leading to substantive talks between the parties. They would also expect to hear some commitment from Israel, and afterward from the Palestinians, to continue the peace process on the basis of what has already been agreed.

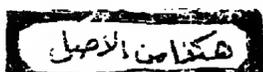
Thirdly, if these points are fulfilled, they would hope that the new atmosphere would enable the parties to resume negotiations over final status arrangements. I don't think they will go into details or even mention Har Homa or the settlements, for instance, in any joint statement that is issued after the summit. This is why more detailed issues, including the building at Har Homa, have not been put on the agenda.

What would happen if the summit fails to achieve any of the somewhat moderate aims set by the Egyptians?

I would be surprised if these minimal aims would not be met. All of the sides are aware of the dangers if the meeting ends with absolutely nothing or a negative image. In such circumstances, there would be a danger of the peace process deteriorating even further. In such a case, the pressure from Egyptian public opinion and that of the Arab world to adopt a tougher stance against Israel would much more difficult for the Egyptian government to ignore.

DRIVE CAREFULLY

HAR HABAYH - Who Will Prevail?
Missions from the banners of Hamas and the mosques in Damascus, Catholic diplomats from the Vatican in Rome vie with young Israelis and the Moslems in gain control of 'THE AGREEMENT'.



Wiesenthal Center to host restitution claims parley

By TOM TUGEND

LOS ANGELES - The Simon Wiesenthal Center has invited senior officials and experts from 15 countries to a three-day conference in Geneva to address worldwide restitution claims by the victims of Nazism.

The conference theme of "Property and Restitution: A Moral Responsibility to History" will be discussed June 23-25 from the historical, political, legal and moral perspectives. About 150-200 participants are expected.

"We have now a window of opportunity to deal with these issues on a global basis," said Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Wiesenthal Center. "The international character of this conference will indicate that responsibility

for restitution extends well beyond Switzerland." Invitations have been extended to the foreign ministers of Switzerland, Britain, Israel and Argentina to address the opening session on the responsibility of political leaders toward victims of Nazism. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY), who has spearheaded Senate hearings on Nazi gold and Jewish accounts held by Swiss banks, will participate.

Investigative writers and historians from Argentina, France, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and Turkey are to present "A Global Report Card" on restitution issues affecting their countries.

Naphtali Lavie, vice-chairman of the Israel-based World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO), will speak on the overall Jewish per-

spective. Emrys Davies, secretary-general of the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, founded in 1946 by the United States, Britain and France, will give an overview of the commission's work.

The fate and possible recovery of paintings and other art works looted by the Nazis will be discussed by experts from the United States, France, Holland, Germany and Belgium.

Switzerland's Catholic Bishop Amadee Grab and Chief Rabbi Alexandre Safran of Geneva will weigh the spiritual and moral dimensions of restitution.

Veteran Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal will close the conference with an address on "Memory as the Key to the Future."



In Herzog's memory
Foreign Minister David Levy (left), Aura Herzog, Sen. Daniel Moynihan (left rear) and Ben-Gurion University president Avishai Braverman pose yesterday at the dedication of the university's Chaim Herzog Center for Middle Eastern and Diplomatic Research, named in memory of the country's sixth president.

ANALYSIS

Eizenstat Report: Questions, but few answers

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - The other shoe dropped last week when Switzerland issued its formal response to the long-awaited American report on Nazi gold. In a seven-page declaration, the Swiss Federal Council expressed irritation that the US went beyond mere history and into "political and moral values" in its review of the Reich's financial dealings.

It was last summer when the US first alluded to such a review. "Just as Switzerland may have to undergo some painful examination about its [war-time] role, so too will the US government," Stuart Eizenstat, the lead US official on property restitution, said last August in Jerusalem. In the months since, there have been frenzied expectations about what the Eizenstat Report would expose and who would benefit from the revelations.

The report was released on May 7; Bern reacted last Thursday. But neither the report nor the reactions say much about how nations proceed from here.

When they discuss Nazi gold, Switzerland and the US are dissecting the Washington Agreement, an accord they reached a half-century ago. The two have been rehabbing old issues - whether the Swiss

turned over appropriate amounts of Nazi loot and whether, as the Reich's bankers, they profited and prolonged Germany's ability to wage war by trading with it.

There have been some recent calls for Switzerland and the Allies to renegotiate the 1946 Washington Agreement, though neither side has shown itself willing to do so. In Congress and within Jewish organizations, there has been a strong sentiment, 50 years after the fact, that the US made a bad deal in accepting \$58 million from Switzerland to settle the Nazi gold question. Some of the agitation implies that a better deal would have benefited the Jews, but there is no firm evidence of that.

Washington and Bern also are engaged in an ideological debate about neutrality. Five decades ago, the Allies did not question Swiss neutrality.

Instead, they said they were "cognizant" of Switzerland's difficult position during the war, according to the US report, which was compiled by 11 federal agencies. Now, however, Eizenstat essentially has said Swiss neutrality was an immoral choice - a view the Swiss dispute.

For the US, the Eizenstat report was something of a mea culpa. "With greater support and interest

from Allied leadership, it might have been possible to strike a better bargain on the looted gold and other German assets in neutral countries," the report said.

After surviving Hitler, the victims then suffered from "the sad combination of indifference on the part of neutrals and inaction on the part of the Allies," said Eizenstat, who is now undersecretary of state-designate.

Switzerland, increasingly testy, says it is making amends with a historical review and a humanitarian fund for needy survivors. It also plans to allot aid to survivors from a "solidarity fund" that would be financed with income from Switzerland's gold reserves. However, the prospect of that fund had not been able to sustain popular Swiss support.

Although it made a public atonement, the US has not indicated its intent or resolve to rectify its "inaction." Nor is there any hint that Americans are in a hurry, although Eizenstat's recent public appearances routinely appeal for assistance for survivors, especially those in Eastern Europe.

Eizenstat has called for a "substantial portion" of the \$70 million in so-called residual gold to be used for the victims of Nazi atrocities. That gold, held by the Tripartite

Gold Commission, technically must be used as restitution to the states whose central banks were raided by the Nazis. An international conference later this year in London may address that issue.

If that prospect succeeds, it comes a half-century after the Allies failed to press strenuously for funds for refugee relief. At war's end, they targeted only \$25 million for refugee aid, while they amassed more than \$330 million in Nazi loot - in 1946 values - for restitution to the European banks that had been plundered by Germany.

The tripartite commission began distributing gold in October 1947, and by mid-1948, it had disbursed \$295 million. By contrast, in April 1949, the International Refugee Organization announced in Geneva that it had distributed \$15.3 million to help victims of Nazi persecution. Of that, \$9.8 million went to the Jewish Agency, and \$5.2 million to the Joint Distribution Committee.

In the meantime, the US has not made a strenuous commitment to review its post-war decision to settle claims for heirless war-era Jewish assets in the US for \$500,000, although at least \$6 million - in 1945 dollars - in unclaimed American bank deposits may have belonged to Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Iranian: Iraq wanted joint attack on Israel in Gulf War

TEHRAN (AP) - It was one of the mysteries of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis: Why did Iraq send the bulk of its warplanes to Iran? US-led allied commanders and Middle East experts at the time believed it was to keep the jets safe from the allied bombardment of Iraq. But a senior Iranian official said yesterday that it was part of a desperate plan by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to draw Iran into a joint attack on Israel.

Had such an attack been carried out, it could have changed the course of the conflict, said the Foreign Ministry official.

The official disclosed that Izzat Ibrahim, the vice chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, said in a letter to Iran that there would never be a better time to attack Israel and get rid of it forever.

The letter, addressed to President Hashemi Rafsanjani, placed the Iraqi warplanes and pilots under

full Iranian command, he said. "Iran turned down the plan because it was not in its national interests," the official said in an interview.

Allied officers estimated that about 90 Iraqi warplanes were moved to Iran.

Iraq said it sent 115 military aircraft and some civilian airliners. Iran has said it received just 22 planes, some of them plundered by Iraq from Kuwait.



Ahmed Daqansa (Reuters file photo)

Naharayim killer goes on trial today

AMMAN (Reuters) - A Jordanian soldier who shot dead seven Beit Shemesh schoolgirls at a Jordan Valley border post goes on trial for his life in a military court here today charged with premeditated murder.

Army driver Ahmed Daqansa, 26, emptied three rifle clips at the teenage girls as they visited the Island of Peace at Naharayim, on March 13.

Daqansa, who faces the gallows if found guilty, confessed to the shooting but said he had reacted impulsively when the girls teased him while he prayed, his lawyer Ahmed Nijdawi said.

"He admitted that he opened fire. But it was not planned," Nijdawi told Reuters.

King Hussein made condolence visits to the families of the girls, aged 13 and 14, and said Daqansa should have been shot dead on the spot by his army comrades.

But while government officials condemned the killing as a vile and criminal act, Jordan's vocal peace critics have said Daqansa's motives were patriotic.

"People feel he is not guilty, that he is a national hero," Nijdawi said. Daqansa will face a panel of five military judges at an army base near Naqur, a few kilometers south of Amman.

Nijdawi said the court would read out the charges of premeditated killing, attempt to kill, and military possession. Daqansa would enter a plea and the trial would probably adjourn for a few days before witnesses are called. "He will tell the court he is not guilty," Nijdawi said.

He said the charge sheet states that Daqansa had planned to kill Israelis in the past, but held back. On the day of the shooting he left alone the first group of Israelis who visited Naharayim, because they were under 10 years old, it said.

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NEWS

in brief

Couple get prison terms for child abuse

A Beersheba couple were both given prison sentences yesterday for abusing their five-year-old son. According to the conviction, in one incident the mother ordered her husband to burn the boy with a knife heated over a flame. Beersheba Magistrate's Court ordered the father, 30, to serve eight months and the mother, 28, 10 months. However, since the couple has six children the judge ordered the mother to serve her sentence first.

Police organizing to protect Golan Druse

Top Galilee district police brass met yesterday to decide on measures to protect the lives and property of Golan Heights Druse who support Israel. The meeting followed an increasing number of incidents, including two torchings of a storeroom belonging to Salman Abu Salah, a leading supporter of Israel, and an attempt to torch his car. Community leaders say many Israeli citizens among the Druse are considering leaving the Golan because of social and religious discrimination against them within the Druse community.

British minister due here

Foreign Office Minister Derek Fatchett, responsible for the Middle East in the new British government, was due to arrive here from Cairo late last night for a one-day fact-finding trip, part of a short tour he is making of the region. He is to meet today with Foreign Minister David Levy in Jerusalem, visit Har Homa, and then travel to Gaza to meet Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat in the evening. He will be traveling tomorrow to Jordan and Syria. Fatchett is the first member of the Blair government to visit the region. He was previously here as opposition spokesman for foreign affairs in December 1995 and January 1996.

Settlements may be merged

Interior Ministry Director-General Ya'acov Efrati has appointed a committee to investigate the possibility of merging local council authorities in Judea and Samaria. The local authorities slated for investigation are part of the Samaria regional council. A ministry spokeswoman said yesterday the committee is to examine the present municipal structures of Elkana, Oranit, Sha'are Tikva and Etz Ephraim to determine if they can be merged. The committee will present its findings in three months time.

Thirtysomethings get chance at academia

Some 200 individuals over age 30 who never received a matriculation certificate have been accepted for studies in the nation's universities, the Education Ministry announced Sunday. The students, mostly from development towns and Project Renewal neighborhoods, are part of a new program entitled "Thirty Plus to University" being run jointly by the Housing Ministry's Project Renewal program and the Education Ministry.

Some 1,000 students of similar age and background are studying in a special preparatory course prior to beginning academic studies.

Education Minister Zevulun Hammer said the project will help reduce educational, social and economic gaps between development towns and larger cities.

Netanya gangland figure murdered

By RAINE MARCUS

Alex Dubisky, 46, known to Netanya police as a casino operator, was gunned down in gangland-style in broad daylight as he was sitting in his cafe in the city's busy Kikar Atzma'ut yesterday. Eyewitnesses told police that Dubisky was shot in the head at close range by a motorcycle rider, who sped off after making sure that his victim was dead.

His wife, Paulina, was gunned down three months ago and police believe that her murderer had intended to kill Dubisky. A year prior to Paulina's death, her son Shlomi, a soldier, was also shot dead as he was getting into his stepfather's car. Police believe the bullets which ended his life were also meant for Dubisky.

Dubisky was sitting in his cafe when a motorcycle rider approached, fired several bullets and sped off. He was hit several times in the head. Police believe the murder was part of a struggle for control of gambling territories in the city. Meanwhile, the body of Suham Zebaida, 31, a divorced mother of two from Lod, was discovered covered with leaves yesterday in a citrus grove near Moshav Ben-

Shimon. Police theorized she was murdered for reasons of "family honor," but are also exploring other avenues in their investigation. Preliminary pathological examinations indicated she was killed 24 to 48 hours previously. A paramedic said she had been severely beaten, especially on the left side of her face, and that her blouse was covered in blood.



Homeless protest

Homeless people protest outside the Jerusalem International Conference Center yesterday, while Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu opened a session of the National Council for the War on Poverty and Social Differences. Netanyahu promised a large-scale land sale to help solve the housing problem. Meretz also held a demonstration at the site, blaming Netanyahu for causing a recession and unemployment. MK Anat Maor called the council a way for Netanyahu to ignore the problem.

Vote on PA funding bill postponed

By LIAT COLLINS

The vote on first reading of a bill relating to the transfer of funds to the Palestinian Authority has been postponed by another week, this time at the initiative of the National Religious Party.

Last week, Labor and Meretz, angered by what they said was Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's attempt to rely on the opposition to get the bill through, despite heavy coalition objections and the massive absence of coalition members for the scheduled vote, decided to turn it into a no-confidence motion.

The bill would extend agreements regarding the transfer of income tax of workers from the

autonomous areas to the PA in force for Gaza and Jericho to the other areas under PA control.

Netanyahu agreed to a request by NRP faction chairman Hanan Porat that Finance Minister Dan Meridor not respond to the bill, delaying the vote by another week.

No-confidence motions are only voted on on Mondays, after the debate has finished and been answered by the government.

Netanyahu agreed to postpone the vote until after his meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak today. Tomorrow, he is expected to meet with NRP MKs to discuss the matter.

Porat said the funds amount to millions of

shekels a year and said there is no reason to continue paying them while the negotiations are frozen and in view of the reports of widespread financial corruption within the PA.

Coalition chairman Michael Eitan, however, criticized Porat and MK Michael Kleiner (Geshet), head of the Land of Israel Front.

"It's unacceptable that there are certain elements within the coalition who from time to time apparently want to prove their loyalty to the settlers and will drag things in such a way that ultimately we'll be left without settlements, peace, or Jerusalem," he said.

Kleiner described the opposition's turning the subject into a no-confidence motion as "a dirty trick."

MKs tackle classroom violence

By LIAT COLLINS

The Knesset Education Committee yesterday tackled the question of violence in schools, with all MKs present describing the situation as serious.

The MKs heard the results of a survey conducted in 11 Jerusalem state and state-religious schools in 1994 among eighth- and 10th-grade students. Fifty percent of the students reported having been involved in some form of physical fight in the previous year; 73% of the boys said they had been involved in at least one incident and 24% said they had been

involved in four or more. Among the girls, 25% reported having been involved in at least one fight and 4% said they had been involved in four or more.

Ch-Supt. Mickey Golan, from the police juvenile department, said the police deals only with cases of violence which are reported. Golan said there had been a rise in the reported cases of violence in schools, but a drop of 8.5% in the number of cases investigated by police in 1996 compared with the previous year.

Committee chairman Emanuel Zissman (Third Way), while taking the findings seriously, said

children had always been involved in fights in schools and the main thing is to discover whether the problem is spreading and whether schools have a policy capable of dealing with it.

At the end of the discussion, the committee issued a declaration expressing concern at the problem of violence in schools among students, toward the teachers and by parents toward teachers.

The committee also called on Education Minister Zevulun Hammer to reexamine the balance between students' and parental rights and the school's jurisdiction on disciplinary matters.

The committee is calling for a parliamentary inquiry to examine the factors influencing the level of violence in schools.

MKs said they would investigate the possibility of legislation which would allow parents more control over the nature of programs shown in children's viewing time, and renewed their demand that Israeli television stations stop showing violent programs at times when children are likely to be watching.

MK Ze'ev Boim (Likud) said part of the problem is due to large classes and lack of manpower.

Panel: Secular schools should absorb Ethiopians

By LIAT COLLINS

"Every possible mistake has been made in the absorption of children from Ethiopian immigrant families into the school system," MK Adisu Massala (Labor) told the Knesset Immigration and Absorption Committee yesterday.

He demanded the government "take a decision to disperse Ethiopian immigrant students among schools in the correct proportions while providing a reasonable budget and professional manpower."

Committee chairwoman Naomi Blumenthal (Likud) called on non-religious state schools to open their gates to the immigrant children. "It's unacceptable that state school principals can prevent children from a certain community from integrating within their schools," she said.

Yohanan Ben-Ya'acov, head of the Education Ministry's absorption authority, said some 13,000 Ethiopian immigrant children study in state religious schools

and 3,000 in state secular schools. He said the choice is the parents, but Yehuda Aharon, assistant supervisor for religious schools, said the reason for the uneven distribution is that state secular schools are not particularly willing to absorb them.

Ben-Ya'acov presented statistics showing that in 1994, 32 percent of Ethiopian immigrant children took matriculation exams, but only 23% actually matriculated. Last year, 57% took the exams and 39% passed and got a certificate.

He said the education system this year has invested some NIS 130 million in the Ethiopian immigrant children, including special lessons and projects.

According to Chen Lipschitz, from the Brookdale Institute, there is almost no financial aid for children of nursery school age. Some 3,000 Ethiopian immigrant children under the age of three are in no educational framework. "The problem starts there and is reflected later in school," she said.

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Japanese vessels ram island protesters

HONG KONG) - Sea-borne Chinese protesters headed for port yesterday after two vessels were rammed by the Japanese coast guard to prevent them from landing on a disputed island chain, the protesters' Hong Kong headquarters said.

Spokesman Ho Hom-man said the vessel carrying Hong Kong protesters sprang a leak after being hit repeatedly by Japanese vessels, and was heading to Taiwan.

Eleven journalists were being taken to Taiwan after their boat also was rammed by Japanese vessels, rousing six or seven of them into the sea.

There were no casualties, Ho said, but two protesters from the Hong Kong boat remained in Japanese custody after jumping or being thrown aboard a coast-guard vessel.

The protesters had sailed from Hong Kong and Taiwan to the Diaoyu archipelago, Senkaku in Japanese, half-way between Taiwan and Okinawa. They had planned to land on one of the uninhabited islets to stake China's and Taiwan's claim to them. Japan rules the islets and insists they are Japanese territory.

China yesterday slammed Japan's military alliance with the United States, accusing the two allies of targeting Beijing and warning of a resurgence in Japanese militarism.

"The long-term goal (of the alliance) is to deal with the imaginary troubles made by an economically and militarily stronger China," the official *China Daily* quoted Zhao Jieqi, a research fellow of the institute of Japanese studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as saying.

The *China Daily* also denounced the planned revision of the 1978 Japan-US joint "defence guidelines" for security cooperation. It is expected to be updated by autumn this year.

"The redefined US-Japan security agreement helps set the tiger out of the cage," the newspaper quoted Lin Jiangyong, director of the department of northeast Asian studies of the Chinese Contemporary International Relations Institute, as saying in the same article.

"Japan...can burst its shackles and develop military strength without much restraint," Liu said. "Considering Japan's unrepentant attitude towards its militarist past, it is clear that China and other victims of Japan's invasion war will have cause for increased worry," the newspaper said. (Agencies)



Turkish Chief of Staff Ismail Hakkı Karadayı and other generals accompany Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan during a visit to a cemetery yesterday. Earlier, the military told Erbakan it was 'purging' its pro-Islamic officers. (Reuters)

Turkish military pressures Islamist Premier Erbakan

News agencies

ANKARA - Turkey's generals yesterday once again rebuked Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan for his Islamic policies, announcing a purge of pro-Islamic officers.

It was the latest clash between the military, which considers itself the guardian of Turkey's secular system, and the governing Welfare Party, which has been seeking to put a greater Muslim stamp on Turkey.

The generals summoned Erbakan for a six-hour closed-door meeting. A brief military statement said "necessary decisions were taken regarding the disciplinary and ethical situations of some personnel."

It referred to the expulsions of some pro-Islamic officers from the army. Their number was not given.

Erbakan apparently was pressured into signing off on the deci-

sion, but requested that it should be played down to avert criticism from his constituency.

The statement also said "domestic and foreign threats to Turkey were assessed" during the meeting. The army calls radical Islam such a threat.

Erbakan has avoided defying the generals openly, but he has resisted giving in to their demands to end Islamic policies.

The military served notice to Erbakan in February to take measures to protect secularism. The directives include closing down religious oriented schools and banning Islamic attire.

Last week, four deputies of the center-right True Path party resigned from the party to push their leader, Deputy Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, to withdraw from the coalition.

Among Erbakan's Islamization moves have been the rearrangement of work hours to fit fasting times during Ramadan, a proposal to allow female civil servants to

wear Islamic head covers and plans to build a mosque in Istanbul's main square.

He also advocates a foreign policy tailored to draw Turkey closer to Arab states and Iran. Turkey is a NATO member and hopes to join the European Union.

A prosecutor last week filed charges to shut down Welfare, saying the party is unconstitutional because of its Islamist stance.

In the southern coastal city of Antalya Turkish police yesterday arrested 17 people for membership of an illegal Islamic group.

They were charged with membership of the outlawed Anatolian Federal Islamic State and trying to replace the constitution with a system based on religious principles, the state-run agency Anadolu said, without giving further details.

Meanwhile Cyprus yesterday rejected Turkey's position that it has occupied a third of that country since 1974 to protect the

Turkish Cypriot minority.

Turkey is in Cyprus because "it considers it a Turkish colony," President Glafcos Clerides said in a written statement.

He said Turkey's "expansionist intentions" are demonstrated by actions such as the colonization of the Turkish-occupied north by mainland settlers, changing place names and destroying "our cultural heritage and many others."

The Cypriot leader was responding to weekend remarks by Turkish President Suleyman Demirel who said that Turkey's only interest in Cyprus is the security of the Turkish Cypriot minority.

A breakaway Turkish Cypriot state set up in the north is recognized only by Ankara.

Clerides also rejected Demirel's claim that Cyprus cannot join the European Union before Turkey. This claim "betrays Mr. Demirel's mentality within whose frame Cyprus is considered a Turkish colony," he said.

Autocracy returns to Kinshasa

KINSHASA - It can be as seemingly harmless as not paying the bus fare, or as deadly as shooting a defenseless man in the back.

A week after welcoming Laurent Kabila's victorious rebel alliance into Kinshasa with cheers and palm fronds, Kinshasans cite increasing signs of the autocracy so prevalent under Mobutu Sese Seko, the Zairian dictator Kabila ousted.

Raphael Ghenda, the information minister of the newly-named Congo, announced a ban on demonstrations Saturday night, a few hours after soldiers broke up an opposition march and detained a few dozen protesters. They took film and videotapes from journalists covering the march.

And yesterday the Kabila regime banned all activities of political parties and public demonstrations in the capital until further notice, citing a need to ensure security. The crackdown, announced by state television on its main lunchtime news, followed a

weekend decision by veteran opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi and his militants to stage fresh protest marches in the city on tomorrow and Friday.

Officials said the measure did not extend beyond the capital. "Individual or collective public demonstrations are formally prohibited throughout the city of Kinshasa until further notice," the communique said, quoting a need to protect public safety.

"All activities of the political parties are banned in Kinshasa until further notice," the communique added.

At the same time, it said no unit of Kabila's forces would be allowed to circulate in the city without specific orders.

Anyone with weapons in their possession should hand them in or they would be considered "enemies of the liberation of the people" and would face the full weight of the law, it added.

Earlier, Kabila's justice minister, Celestin Louangy, said the law in the new Democratic Republic of Congo would be administered impartially.

"We must end something that has always prevailed in this country - a sense of impunity," he said as he moved into his new offices.

Opposition activists marched in Kinshasa on Friday and Saturday. Kabila forces fired in the air to disperse them and took away some of the protesters. Government officials said they were later released.

Kinshasa went to work normally yesterday despite opposition predictions of a spontaneous stay-home protest. Kabila's ministers accuse Tshisekedi of deluding the people to feed his own ambition.

Ex-ministers arrested in Sierra Leone army coup

FREETOWN (Reuters) - Troops in Sierra Leone's capital searched houses looking for ministers of the former civilian government yesterday, a day after a military council seized power in the West African state.

Military sources said five former ministers were detained at the military headquarters.

South Africa joined the UN and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in condemning Sunday's coup, which put an end to just over a year of civilian rule.

The coup leaders announced the formation of an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) led by Major Johnny Paul Koromah. They said they wanted to bring rebels of the Revolutionary United Front into the government to consolidate an elusive peace in the country's civil war.

Staff at Freetown's main hospital said at least 15 people were killed in the fighting. Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouze said the dead included two Lebanese.

The hospital sources said two Nigerian soldiers from the West African ECOMOG force had been killed in the fighting, but ECOMOG Field Commander General Victor Mahu said in Lagos there had been no Nigerian casualties.

AFRC spokesman Captain Paul Thomas urged people to return to work but shops and markets remained closed, though hundreds of people came out to view the damage from fighting around the presidential offices.

Koromah said he had overthrown president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah because his government, elected last year after four years of military rule, had failed to consolidate peace and the political situation had encouraged tribal conflict.

Rebel leader Foday Sankoh, speaking from the Nigerian capital Abuja, where he has been kept by Nigeria's military rulers for the past two months, declined to comment on the invitation to join the military government.

WORLD

in brief

Yeltsin says NATO accord good for world

PARIS (Reuters) - Russian President Boris Yeltsin said an arrival in Paris that an agreement between Moscow and NATO to be signed today was a major step for Russia and the entire world.

"It's a big step for Russia, for NATO, for Europe and for the whole world," Yeltsin told reporters. "It's good for Russia, America, France, England, Germany."

They all won, all Europe won. And security won - that's the main thing." Before leaving Moscow, Yeltsin had reiterated Moscow's general opposition to NATO's plans to take in new members from eastern Europe.

The alliance is due to issue the first invitations to prospective members - probably Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic - at a summit in Madrid in July.

Rival Koreas sign aid accord for hungry North

BEIJING (Reuters) - South Korea agreed to send thousands of tons of food aid to the famine-threatened North under the first direct agreement between the Red Cross societies of the Cold War rivals in more than a decade.

Seoul officials hailed the agreement to ship 50,000 tons of food aid to the North by the end of July as a symbolic lifting of the veil of isolation and ignorance hung around the North's hungry people.

"We have no doubt that this agreement will (help build momentum) to increase mutual cooperation between (the) two Koreas on the basis of humanitarianism," said South Korean Red Cross official Kogh Young-ke.

US Air Force sergeant gets 30 years for rape

FAIRCHILD AIR FORCE BASE (AP) - A former Air Force base security officer was sentenced to 30 years in prison, a day after a military jury convicted him of rape and 14 related charges.

Master Sgt. Napoleon Bailey, 39, will also receive a dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of all pay and reduction to the lowest enlisted rank.

The former Fairchild Air Force Base security officer was convicted on 15 of the 17 charges he faced for attacks reported by three women. One alleged victim was a fellow base security officer.

President-elect pays homage to Khomeini

TEHERAN (AP) - Iran's president-elect paid his respects at the grave of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, pledging to continue the path of the late revolutionary leader.

Mohammad Khatami, a moderate cleric who gained a stunning victory in Iran's first free election since the 1979 revolution, was welcomed by Khomeini's grandson, Hassan, to the golden-domed mausoleum that is a place of pilgrimage for millions every year.

"By the blessing of the revolution the people of Iran have started a new chapter in their history," said Khatami, whose victory at the polls against a hard-line cleric was seen as a signal for a milder form of Islam.

Skydiver escapes doomed plane

MIAMI (AP) - Clinging to a wing and waiting to be told to jump, skydiving student Carol O'Connell watched in horror as the pilot struggled with the controls and the little plane began to stall.

With 22 jumps under her belt, O'Connell was left with two choices: leap from the out-of-control and possibly overloaded plane or hang on and hope the pilot would recover. She jumped.

As she parachuted slowly to the ground, she could see the Cessna 210 with six colleagues trapped inside as it corkscrewed into a field of sweet potatoes and burst into flames. Everyone aboard was killed.

"I'm very grateful to be alive," O'Connell, 43, yesterday told the *Sun-Sentinel* of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. "I can't explain why I'm still alive while these other people have left behind many loved ones."

"I guess when it's your time to go, you go. It wasn't my time," investigators were looking into whether the single-engine plane was carrying too much weight, with seven people and skydiving gear aboard an aircraft designed for six. The passenger seats had been removed to give the sky-

divers room.

Video filmed by a witness indicated the plane wasn't going fast enough after making a turn.

The plane took off from Homestead General Airport and crashed about a two km away in a rural farming district between Miami and the Everglades. On a videotape of the crash captured by a witness, the plane spins to the ground at a 45 degree angle, its nose down.

"It was pretty much a belly flop," fire Capt. Robert Suarez said. "It landed flat with much force."

O'Connell was on a small platform attached to the right side of the plane, awaiting instructions from the jump master as the plane climbed. She was supposed to jump at 1,000 meters, but then the left wing dipped and the plane began to shake.

"The engine seemed fine," O'Connell told the newspaper. "One of the last things I saw was the pilot struggling to handle the plane."

She jumped and the plane spiraled crazily into the field a few seconds later. She landed moments after that, 24 meters away from the flaming wreckage.

Book department

THE POMEGRANATE PENDANT: A Historical Novel by Dvora Waysman



This is a novel of Jerusalem, seen through the eyes of Mazal ben-Yichya - a fourteen year old newlywed in Sana'a in the year 1881, through the years in the Jewish Quarter, to the finale in 1956. The events, people and streets of Jerusalem are made real for the reader. Hardcover, 217 pp.

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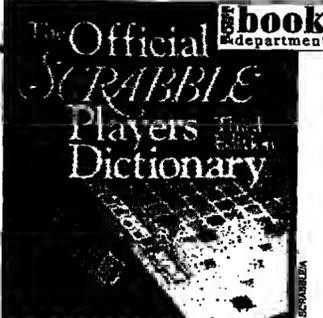
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The Sharm summit

The summit in Sharm e-Sheikh today between President Hosni Mubarak and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is shaping up to be exactly what both sides said it would not be: a summit for the sake of a summit. There is nothing terribly wrong with a summit that, like the recent Weizman-Arafat meeting, breaks more ice without reaching clear water. The parties should not, however, lose sight of the real goal ahead: a way through the current impasse so that final-status talks can begin in earnest.

Israel and the Palestinians are now like two arm-wrestlers who spend an inordinate amount of effort jockeying for a slightly better starting position and will not let the real match begin. Last-minute efforts, such as regarding Har Homa, or adding a few thousand units to existing settlements, cannot fundamentally change the situation that has been created on the ground over the past 30 years.

Each side has its own framework for last-minute maneuvering. For Israel, it is to solidify its connection to certain areas by building new neighborhoods. The Palestinians, too, are quietly playing the same game by building illegally within Jerusalem and along the new Israeli-built bypass roads. In addition, and more importantly, the Palestinians have a much better way to improve their pre-final-status position: Oslo's further redeployments. Though both Israel and the Palestinians are building houses here and there, the Palestinians can look forward to two further handovers of significant chunks of land, which will fundamentally change the starting point for final-status negotiations. These two withdrawals required by Oslo, one of which will ostensibly include the first withdrawal proposed by Israel, but rejected by the Palestinians, will dwarf the last-minute building efforts that are causing such controversy.

The task of today's summit, and others that may follow, should be to devise the safest way through the minefield of pre-final-status threats to the peace process.

The legal status under Oslo of Israeli building and the upcoming redeployments is different — the first is permitted and the second required — but in a strategic sense the two are linked. The significance of both is in their impact on the starting positions of each side in final-status talks.

But the Palestinians cannot have their way on both sides of the equation. They cannot dictate a freeze on Israeli building and, at the same time, take away Israel's US-recognized right to determine the extent of the further redeployments. One possible way out of this crisis might

be for Israel to give the Palestinians a choice: a settlement freeze and symbolic redeployments, or no freeze and more substantial redeployments.

The Palestinians are right, in a way, to identify "unilateral actions" as a great threat to the peace process. But requiring Israel to stop such actions, while receiving nothing in return, is also a form of unilateralism — a unilateral concession. Both forms of unilateralism have an explosive effect on the peace process.

The Palestinians define any Israeli action they object to as "unilateral," so such actions are by definition irritants in the peace process. At the same time, demands for unilateral concessions by Israel undermine the process by convincing Israelis that it is a one-way street, leading to much greater concessions that will endanger Israel without bringing peace.

It is the duty of nations playing the role of honest brokers — such as Egypt, Jordan, and the United States — to attempt to eliminate both forms of unilateralism. On this matter, Netanyahu is right: Israel must not be the only party of whom flexibility is demanded. Perhaps a six-month "technical" freeze on building at Har Homa can be part of a solution — but what are the Palestinians willing to pay for such a concession? A return to the status quo ante — restarting talks and restoring security cooperation — is not enough.

If Egypt really wants to play a constructive role in the peace process, it cannot simply become a megaphone for Arafat's positions. If Egypt is backing Arafat to the hilt — or worse, stiffening his stance — then it should not be surprised if the summit has no result. If, however, Egypt presses Arafat to make concessions in response to those being demanded of Israel, then there is a real chance of forward movement.

All the parties should also keep in mind that, whatever the outcome of the summit, Arafat has for the most part won his battle against Israeli building in the territories. Netanyahu is now battling to hold on to Israel's right to build, but everyone knows that, as a practical matter, that right will only be exercised in severely limited form. Arafat has already raised the political cost of building so high that Netanyahu is unlikely to match even the modest expansion that occurred under Rabin and Peres.

Settlement expansion may not be formally frozen, but it has already been slowed to a snail's pace. The situation is ripe for that famous diplomatic strategy: finding a formula that will allow both sides to declare victory and go home.



Yasser's schoolroom

MICHAEL OREN

Hebron Agreement. Worked like a charm.

HOW, though, might Netanyahu apply that lesson? Truth is, he already has.

By acting to expand the settlements, by building on Har Homa, the prime minister is backtracking

The PM has yet another chance to learn from his wily Oslo partner today at Sharm e-Souk. Question is: How good a pupil is he?

He pledges made by his Labor predecessors, assurances that formed the very groundwork of the peace process. Like Arafat, he has portrayed himself as a target of internal pressures, a politician who must respond to his constituency's demands.

And like Arafat, he isn't going to reaffirm any previous commitments — sell that old merchandise twice — without exacting a fee.

How big a fee, though? This is the major question, the one that will show just how good a student of Arafat's Netanyahu really is.

In his meeting with Mubarak, the prime minister's objective should not merely be exchanging Har Homa for an end to terrorism, or settlements in return for reviving the talks.

No: Netanyahu must emerge from the summit with more than the status quo ante. He must return with earnings well above those he would have gleaned in any case if construction had never begun.

Those earnings can be exacted

not only from the Palestinians, but from the Egyptians as well, as the price of their leadership role in the peace process.

Among possible payments Israel could demand are: a radical reduction in anti-Israel and anti-Semitic propaganda in the Egyptian and Palestinian press; the extradition of known terrorist suspects from the Palestinian Authority to Israel, and the release of Azzam Azzam, the Israeli Druze now languishing in an Egyptian jail on trumped-up spying charges.

Then he could go for a moratorium on all illegal Palestinian building in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza; concerted efforts by the PA to disarm Hamas and curtail its political activities, and an end to the PA-approved assassination of Arabs suspected of selling land to Israel.

Finally, he could demand the cessation of Egypt's diplomatic campaign against Israel's nuclear capability.

The bill, of course, could be longer, and the items more expensive; Netanyahu must not sell himself cheaply. But neither must Israel's "concession stand" be too pricey. This also is one of Arafat's lessons, namely, knowing when the profits have been maximized, at what point the bargaining must stop.

Netanyahu must not be deprived of his profits, but neither should he risk Mubarak, his customer, walking out.

This, then, will be the prime minister's true test at today's summit: demanding more for his goods, but not so much as to make the deal fall through. His challenge is to learn Arafat's lessons, ingest and adapt them to Israel's needs.

What has worked like a charm for Yasser may well work at Sharm for Bihl.

The writer is a Middle East historian.

Live & let live

SUSAN BELLOS

Unlike some of my more chic acquaintances, I am not yet moving to Tel Aviv.

This is quite mad, of course. My skin bursts like a fried sausage every time the *hansin* dumps itself down over Jerusalem. And I love the seaside.

I can't even claim, as many of us apologists used to, that I'm here because Jerusalem is so beautiful. Jerusalem is growing uglier by the day, what with the ripped-up orchards of Ramat Rachel making way for even more hideous "cottages."

What used to be secret and mysterious, such as the hillside of North Jerusalem, topped by the flat quirky peak of Nebi Samwil, is now a deadly suburban sprawl.

In fact, even though ever so many people are quarreling about this place being sacred, primarily to themselves, there are very few secret places left here. Jerusalem, with its hidden courtyards and alleys, used to be rife with secrets, and prided itself on its private, inner life.

However, esthetics, spirituality and all that, have about as much impact in this place as Victorian ladies having fits of the vapors. What really counts in Jerusalem are the eternal verities of real estate, religion and politics.

Which means, for example, that North Jerusalem is now rife with banks and synagogues, and doesn't have a single cinema, let alone a pub.

It also means that more and more of my neighbors are attired in long floppy skirts over sneakers, three-quarter-length sleeves in summertime, and rather peculiar hats.

I don't care about this, of course, because I often find it a rather charming expression of Jerusalem's mosaic. As far as I am concerned, they are just quaint.

The trouble is that these days, not being very good at arithmetic, I haven't noticed that I am now quaint, though less than charming, to my neighbors. While I

Sacred and secret: my private battle for Jerusalem

couldn't care less what they eat or how they dress, they really don't like the smell of my food cooking, or the sight of me in my jeans.

HANG on, all those brought up on fair play etc. exclaim, we may be surrounded by a sea of fundamentalists, but it ain't quite Qum yet.

When you actually get down to it, wearing a skirt would not be the end of the world. As I don't drive, closing even more roads on Saturday won't seriously inconvenience my life-style. And not being deeply into heavy metal, I rather appreciate the sheer quiet of Shabbat.

The thing is, though, that while I may be equally odd in my neighbors' eyes I, unlike them, have no battle plans drawn up.

I don't really intend to rescue Geula or the Bukharan Quarter from the fundamentalists and build a small neighborhood theater there, or, perish the thought, a concert hall.

I don't even allow myself to fantasize about a sane alternative to this city's nightmare traffic snarl, i.e. an underground transit system.

Who cares about all those whimps suffering from allergies, asthma and cancer, let alone the simple misery of getting to work on a Sunday morning? They are as nothing compared to the national imperative of not stepping on old Jewish bones by mistake.

Being a pacifistic middle-aged female, I just want to live in my house, in my style. And I wouldn't dream of chucking rocks in anybody's direction.

I've also grown up with silly notions such as "Let 100 different flowers bloom." The difference is that as far as many of my neighbors are concerned there's only one flower, and it's black.

Among my more socially advanced and mobile acquaintances, responses to all those black flowers range from threatening to breed more, or to slide off, if not quite to the coastal plain, at least to south of Rehov Straus.

This is, after all, a town built on real estate, religion and politics. And there's one battle about all three going on right now.

It's the battle for the validity of my vision of home as well as theirs. It's the battle for all this city's dues-paying citizens to live, eat, open their mouths or keep secrets as they see fit, and find their own kind of sacredness.

As for sliding off to Tel Aviv, I'd rather chuck a rock.

The writer is a Jerusalem journalist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NRP POLITICAL POSITIONS

Sir, — I am sure MK Shaul Yahalom would appreciate your returning him to his home in Elkana rather than recording him, as Herb Keinson has it, as living in Kedumim (May 14).

Perhaps, when one uses demography to define political positions, the NRP becomes the party of the settlers, since now five of the party's nine members live in the settlements of Yesha. But domicile does not necessarily define political positions. Yigal Bibi, who lives in Gush Etzion, is considered a NRP "dove." Avner Shaki, who lives in Tel Aviv, is considered a NRP "hawk."

Nissan Sliomanski, until Oslo, was dedicated to creating a beautiful, quality, residential town in Elkana. His popularity was and is so deep-rooted that no one could beat him in any local election over

20 years of Elkana's existence. He was a full-time and over-time mayor. Oslo changed him. The threat to Yesha, to Jerusalem and to Elkana proved to him that, with the Rabin/Peres government, there was no territorial consensus, no territorial "red" lines. Everything was vulnerable. So, "he came out of the closet," and showed the leadership qualities nationally which we in Elkana knew and recognized for years from his local activities. That is what he brings to the Knesset.

Together with MK Shaul Yahalom, Elkana will now have contributed two excellent Knesset members devoted to Israel, to its Jewish and democratic values.

MEL BORENSTEIN

Elkana.

OBJECTIONABLE COMMENTS

Sir, — Two items that I read recently in your newspaper have managed to erase a good deal of the joy I felt at having been privileged to celebrate the miracle of Israel's rebirth and continued existence once again.

The first was a comment by Internal Security Minister Kahalani who, after the horrific behavior of a few haredi criminals on Remembrance Day (stoning policemen during the sounding of the siren), decided to compound the felony with his astounding response. How can the man responsible for the police state: "I am sure that their rabbis will punish these hoodlums appropriately." What about the police, the courts? Kahalani has now officially placed an entire segment of the population (haredim) outside and above the law. The next time I am stopped for a traffic violation, can I also have my rabbi deal with me instead of the police or the courts?

The second item was a comment by your reporter Abraham Rabinovich, who continues in this same vein of excluding or isolating parts of the population in his

remarks on Remembrance Day (and Independence Day). When I stood silently as the siren wailed, I was not expressing my "secular discipline and secular calling" (which would be difficult as I am religious). I was paying homage to the fallen, thanking God that my own "Golanchik" had returned safely and hoping that my second son, who just received his first call-up notice, will serve and return safely as well. I am sure that many of my fellow citizens were thinking similar thoughts and not glorying in their religiosity or secularism.

Mr. Rabinovich further divides the country into haredim and secularists. Thank you for disenfranchising me and all the other members of the national religious camp. According to the last election results, we are still around and going strong.

These are but two examples of the way that our leaders (and the media) can exacerbate problems rather than try to deal with them or heal them.

KENNETH C. KOSLOWE

Petah Tikva.

OFFENSIVE HEADLINE

Sir, — The headline of your article of May 7, "Columbian leader's visit displeases US" is disrespectful, not just to Colombia, but to Israel as well. President Samper came to visit a sovereign friend and not a US colony!

Furthermore, your statement that "he is suspected of being linked to drug trafficking" is false. He has been accused (but not convicted) of accepting drug money for his campaign, but never of being involved or profiting personally from the drug business.

JAIME GLOTTMANN

Ra'anana.

THE NE'EMAN ACQUITTAL

Sir, — Only an hour after Ya'acov Ne'eman's acquittal, the pundits of our state radio were defining it as a problem for the prime minister. Now, they explained, Mr. Netanyahu would have to decide what to do about Tzahi Hanegbi and the justice portfolio, even before all the legal developments are played out.

When the investigation of Mr. Ne'eman began, it was defined as a problem for Mr. Netanyahu. By all logic, the acquittal should be seen as a problem for Michael Ben-Yair and his political patrons, as well as for those politicians who are so quick to demand resignations from anyone accused of anything.

But so. The pundits had two scripts ready for the court's decision — both of them attacking the prime minister, one in the event of a conviction and one in the event of an acquittal.

The prime minister indeed has a problem deciding about appointments, but that is not the most important issue brought to light by the Ne'eman acquittal. The important issue is reflected in the reaction of the establishment, including Israel Radio.

ISRAEL PICKHOLTZ

Elazar.

Iran's women got Khatami in

GWYNNE DYER

Atyallah Mohammed Khatami, the surprise victor in the Iranian presidential election, owes a lot to women. Without their vote, he would have barely scraped through. With it, he won an astounding 69 percent of the votes cast.

We won't know for certain until August, but there is speculation that Khatami may even nominate his predecessor Hashemi Rafsanjani's daughter Faiza as his vice-president. The two are political allies, and Faiza, 33, is a political power in her own right.

In appearance she conforms entirely to the revolution's image of an Iranian woman. She wears no cosmetics, and she always appears shrouded in a black chador. But she won the second-highest number of votes in all of

"One of the problems of women in Iran is that they are not present in high levels of government..." she told a women's magazine shortly after being elected to the Iranian parliament last year. "Women should now be getting to the executive level, the presidency. There is no religious bar to this..."

That is a matter of interpretation. Hassan Gani, secretary of the Council of Guardians that vets all candidates for the Iranian presidency, recently stated his view that Islam does bar women from running for presidential office. (The council rejected all nine women who sought to run).

But Iran is a democracy, if a rather limited one, and even the most conservative mullahs cannot ignore who elected Khatami to the presidency.

THE numbers tell the story. Just a month before the election on 23 May, the *Teheran Times* published an opinion poll predicting that the

conservative candidate, parliament speaker Ali Akbar Nateq-Nouri, would win over 40 percent of the votes. Khatami would get only 33 percent, with the rest of the vote divided between minor candidates and "don't knows."

The poll was based on the responses of over 1,000 residents

They want change, and they said so in the polling booths last week

of Tehran, where Khatami was expected to do better than elsewhere. Yet it underestimated his support by more than half.

So did everybody change their minds in one month? Of course not. It's just that an Iranian woman can get into a lot of trouble for talking to strangers, so Iranian opinion polls, whether conducted in the streets or by knocking on doors, are bound to miss most of the female voters.

But in the polling booths, they were there in their millions: The turnout was 88 percent.

So what can Khatami do with this resounding victory, with or without a female vice-president?

Khatami is not a "liberal," a label even more despised in Iran than it is in America; he is a Shi'ite Moslem clergyman. And he has no intention of spending his limited political capital trying to change Iran's terrible relationship with the US.

In foreign policy Khatami is hemmed in by the enmity of the US and the paranoia of Iran's own revolutionary ideology, though he

wants voters that Iran must stop "adoring or hating the West," and develop a more balanced attitude. And on economic and trade issues he has equally little room for maneuver.

Rafsanjani leaves Khatami an economy where debt and inflation are more under control, but it is still a nightmare. Iran's population has literally doubled to 69 million since the 1979 revolution, and economic growth has not remotely kept up.

The true unemployment figure may be as high as 30 percent, and another 30 percent are seriously underemployed by world standards.

Yet the bazaar merchants and impoverished clergymen who became the revolution's political elite are its chief economic beneficiaries as well, so they will not permit major economic reforms.

What's left for Khatami is the political and social field — and it's because they believed that he would start opening Iran up in these areas that the women, the young people, and everybody else interested in change voted for him.

He spoke last year of the need for "freedom of thought and the assurance of being able to express oneself in all security."

Can he deliver? In Iran, people tend to think in symbolic terms. Will he re-legalize satellite dishes? Will he liberalize women's dress codes?

But that matters a lot less than whether he will push Iran down the road toward a more tolerant future, one where women and other human beings without beards and turbans also have a say in the way their country is run, and in the circumstances of their own lives.

The writer is a London-based journalist and historian.

BUSINESS

in brief

Bank Discount Chairman Lahav resigns

Bank Discount Chairman Gideon Lahav, after 23 years with the bank, yesterday announced his resignation from the board of directors. No reason was disclosed. Discount is scheduled to appoint its next board of directors at its regular annual meeting, on June 24, the bank announced. *Jerusalem Post Staff*

Sharon: Ronen land reform to be approved

The recommendations of the Ronen Committee on the reform of the Israel Lands Administration will be passed by the government with the support of the prime minister on Friday, National Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon said yesterday. Sharon warned that with an estimated population of eight million by 2020, Israel must spread out its population. *David Harris*

First quarter housing starts drop 21%

There was a 21 percent decline in the number of housing starts in the first quarter compared with the final three months of 1996, according to Central Bureau of Statistics data published yesterday. In the first three months, 10,900 constructions began, representing an 8% fall from the same period last year. *David Harris*

Interest rates left unchanged

By DAVID HARRIS

There will be no change in the Bank of Israel's key lending rate in June, central bank Governor Jacob Frenkel announced yesterday.

This is the third successive month without a change, leaving the key lending rate at 13.9 percent. The aggregate cut since August stands at 3.1%.

The decision was made despite the Consumer Price Index only rising by 0.7% last month, the lowest April increase in seven years.

"The decision is not made on the basis of one month's data," Frenkel said.

Several factors were taken into account, the bank said in a statement. The need to remain within the government-set 1997 inflation target of 7%-10% was once again key, and economic activity is still slow compared to its full-growth potential.

In addition, long-term M1 money supply is proving to be consistent with the inflation rate, even though there has been a relatively fast expansion in recent months.

In the long term, the bank pointed to multi-year targets for the state budget to remain within the government guidelines and the deficit not be higher than 2.8% of gross domestic product this year, with that figure decreasing each year until 2001.

There is also a need to keep on course to equal inflation rates by 2001 in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, where inflation currently averages a little over 4%.

"Achieving these aims, along with

a liberalization of the financial and capital markets, is important to the strengthening of competitiveness and efficiency and renewing faith in economic policy," read the statement.

"There is certainly a consistency about the governor's actions," said Hebrew University Public Finance Prof. Eitan Sheshinski. "The question is whether the goal [of the bank] is one-dimensional in reducing inflation or whether it should take into account other economic indicators—such as growth, exports and employment. In my opinion, it cannot be one-dimensional—what must be decided is where the division is drawn [between the Treasury and the central bank]."

Sheshinski maintains the bank must make a combined move in lowering interest rates by a significant 1%-1.5%, while lifting the shkel off the bottom of the exchange rate mechanism with a revaluation of some 7% over a period of months.

"With the governor continuing his mistaken interest rates policy and refusing to lower rates, the government must force him to do so as part of a joint economic process that will save the economy from this crisis," Chambers of Commerce President Dan Gillerman said.

Also criticizing Frenkel was Manufacturers Association President Dan Propper.

In calling for a 1.5% cut in rates, Propper accused Frenkel of causing much damage to the economy, including a recession and increase in unemployment.

Gov't: El Al sale plan to be published next week

Yitzhak Levy: Workers' rights must be guaranteed

By DAVID HARRIS

The committee responsible for deciding the nature of El Al's privatization will publish its blueprint "within seven to 10 days," Transport Ministry Director-General Nahoum Langental said yesterday.

It is still unclear what form the sale will take, with differences of opinion still thought to exist between Langental and the other two committee members—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's economics adviser Moshe Leon and Government Companies Authority Director-General Tzipi Livni.

The issue of sale by public flotation or controlling shares was not discussed during a joint sitting of the Knesset Economics and Labor and Social Affairs committees yesterday, which instead focused on the concerns of workers and the issue of operating on Shabbat.

Whatever the future of El Al, workers' rights must not be infringed in any way, said Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy.

He added that he remains staunchly opposed to any plans to operate on Shabbat.

The joint Knesset committee issued a statement which recommended that the company not be privatized if the full rights of workers are not guaranteed and that there be no government discussion of the privatization until comprehensive talks have been held with employees.

Avraham Poraz (Meretz-Shinui) called for the statement to include a demand the company must operate seven days a week under private owners. However, he received no support from MKs for this proposal.

"Who will care for the workers?" asked Labor and Social Affairs Committee chairman Maxim Levy (Gesher). "Look

what happened after the sale of Shekem. All the workers and management were laid off."

In response, Yitzhak Levy (NRP) told the meeting that "the operation of El Al is highly efficient, therefore we have no argument over the place and importance of workers in the company."

At this point, Poraz interrupted proceedings, shouting, "if you won't let the company fly on Shabbat, all this is a waste of time."

Turning to the issue of religion, Yitzhak Levy said he believes Shabbat is not the only crucial issue, but also that of kashrut.

"We must keep the status quo," he said. "This is not just about El Al on Shabbat, but also a doubling of traffic volume at Ben Gurion Airport."

Levy then repeated his claim that there are several religious investors prepared to run El Al

without flights on Shabbat.

Speaking to *The Jerusalem Post* after the meeting, Yitzhak Levy said he will not accept the recommendations of the government committee if they include flying on Shabbat.

When asked if he would resign over the issue, he responded, "I don't believe it will come to that. The government will agree with me."

"The question of Shabbat is for the investors to decide," said El Al general manager Yoel Feldschu. "For many years the company did present balanced books, taking into account security costs and Shabbat."

The company reported \$80 million in losses last year, the first year in the red since 1985.

"If the company remains in its current format, it will soon cease to exist," Knesset Speaker Dan Tichon said in calling for an immediate sale which includes full protection of workers'

Howard Johnson establishes Israel presence

By NICKY BLACKBURN

Howard Johnson International Inc. announced yesterday that four local hotels have joined its chain as the first stage of a Near East program.

The US-based chain, making its first appearance in Israel, also plans in the coming year to open six more hotels across the country and launch several in Cyprus, Greece, Turkey and the Palestinian Authority.

"We aim to have 15 to 20 hotels across the region by 1998," says Shlomo Goffman, chairman of the Israel Land Development Hotels Corporation, which holds the franchise for Howard Johnson in Israel.

The Israeli hotels which joined the chain yesterday are the Ruth Rimon Inn in Safed, the Galei Eilat and Neptune in Eilat, and the Galei Kinneret in Tiberias.

All the Israeli hotels at stake belong to the Israel Land Development Hotels Corp. and have been upgraded to meet Howard Johnson standards.

They will operate as franchise hotels under the company's top brand name, Howard Johnson Plaza. In return, Howard Johnson will receive an undisclosed percentage of their prospective profits.

All the hotels are in the three to five star range.

"Joining Howard Johnson is good for us," Howard Johnson Israel general manager Micky Schwartz said. "We get the brand name and the international reservations system. We are joining a large international firm with tremendous marketing power. To be a domestic hotel chain is no longer enough in today's market. The future in hotels belongs to worldwide names."

"Howard Johnson is one of the most aggressive international chains," said Goffman, former president and CEO of Africa-Israel, who was elected two weeks ago to the Howard Johnson board of directors. "It's very strong in the US and most of the businessmen and tourists coming to Israel are from America. Having Howard Johnson hotels here promises to increase the numbers of American tourists visiting Israel."

He added, however, that much depends on the political situation in Israel.

Howard Johnson, which plans eventually to open hotels throughout the Middle East—including Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan—is owned by HFS Incorporated, the New Jersey-based holding company which includes the Days Inn, Ramada and Park Inn chains, and has an annual \$800 million turnover.

Two years ago HFS brought the Days Inn chain to Israel. There are now six hotels in the chain here.



South Korea agrees to give North Korea food aid
Red Cross Secretary General Lee Byung-woong (right) of South Korea and his North Korean counterpart Paek Yong-ho shake hands over the negotiating table after signing an agreement on food aid in Beijing yesterday. The officials signed the deal allowing South Korea to supply 50,000 tonnes of food aid to neighbor by the end of July. *(Reuters)*

COMPANY RESULTS

Zim slips into red; Clal Ind. net sharply down

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

Zim Israel Navigation Company Ltd. slipped into the red in the first quarter, posting losses of \$12.8 million, compared with net gains of \$2.1m. in the same period last year.

Revenue dropped slightly to \$336.1m. from \$336.2m.

The company attributed the results to continued fierce compe-

tion in all the company's trade areas. To meet the demands of the marketplace, the company said it is expanding its strategic alliances with different shipping companies that operate in the same trade areas, as well as increasing its marketing, sales and service efforts.

Clal Industries reported first-quarter net income dropped 58

percent to NIS 30.1m. from NIS 70.9m. in the same period last year. Revenues fell to NIS 3.05 billion from NIS 3.23b.

The holding company attributed the drop in income to a reduction in productivity in its energy, electronics, paper and textile divisions.

The company said its building materials enterprises remained stable, while its food division is currently restructuring.

Clal Industries previously announced its intention to sell off unprofitable holdings in an attempt to focus on core businesses. Clal (Israel) Ltd. owns 68.5% of Clal Industries.

Elco Holdings Ltd. reported first-quarter net earnings plummeted to NIS 9.37m. from NIS 23.77m. in the same period last year. Revenues for the quarter fell to NIS 711.54m. from NIS 895.18m.

The company, which is Israel's third largest multi-industry holding company after Clal Industries and Koor Industries, owns 77% of Elco Industries Ltd., 61% of Electra (Israel) Ltd., 78% of Electra Consumer Products and 44% of Shekem Ltd.

By JENNIFER FRIEDLIN

Plastics manufacturer Plasson is mulling a third attempt to float the company's shares after two previous abortive bids to go public on the London Stock Exchange, according to Roger Hornett, executive director of Societe Generale, the company that underwrote the previous initial public offerings.

Last October, the company failed in its attempt to raise £20m. by issuing 25 percent of its shares on the London Stock Exchange.

Back then, arguably due to the riots following the opening of an exit for the Western Wall Tunnel, the market failed by a narrow margin to generate the minimal demand needed to meet LSE regulations.

Plasson, the country's largest plastics manufacturer and one of the world's leading companies in manufacturing connectors for polyethylene piping, first planned a share offer last June, but chose to postpone that one due to the uncertainty which followed the election of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Hornett

said. Hornett declined to say which market Plasson would now go for or how much money the company would attempt to raise.

Plasson, Kibbutz Ma'agan Michael's main source of revenue, would have become the first kibbutz company to go public.

After riots erupted in the territories following the opening of the tunnel exit, several British, German, French and Italian companies decided to cancel their orders for Plasson shares, leaving Societe Generale with too few orders for all the shares Plasson had to offer.

Today, the continuance of the peace process is much more certain, giving foreign investors more confidence in local companies, Hornett said.

"Today we know something that we did not know back in October; whether there is a dove or a hawk in office, the peace process is going to go on," he said.

Hornett was in Israel yesterday as part of a roadshow for Comfy Interactive Movies Ltd., a developer of hardware and software for

children. Comfy is planning to issue a prospectus for its Tel Aviv-based IPO on Thursday.

The company, which will hold the offering next week, hopes to raise \$29.3m. based on a pre-IPO valuation of \$73.3m. Comfy's sales totalled \$3.8m. last year.

Hornett said the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange is the appropriate exchange for Comfy, because the company's products are most familiar to Israeli customers and that other markets are problematic.

"Only two out of the nine Israeli companies on [London's

Alternative Investment Market] are trading at a premium, Nasdaq is too expensive, and there is a danger that the high-tech index will collapse at some point," Hornett said.

Comfy's major shareholders include Shamrock Holdings, Dovrat-Shrem & Co., the investment company of Baok Hapoalim, Trust Company of the Maritime Bank and Cowen & Co.

Societe Generale supported Israel's 1995 IPO and underwrote Israel Discount Bank's public issuance, which was three times oversubscribed.

Plasson mulls third attempt at IPO

Underwriter: Previous bids suffered from bad political timing

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Pound sterling (£100,000)	3.875	4.000	4.250
German mark (DM 200,000)	1.825	1.825	2.125
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	0.825	0.750	1.000
Yen (10 million yen)	—	—	—

(Rates vary higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shetel Foreign Exchange Rates* (23.5.97)			
CURRENCY AND TRANSFERS	CHECKS AND BANKNOTES		Rep. Rate**
	Buy	Sell	
U.S. dollar	3.6723	3.7318	3.7041
German mark	1.9917	3.4232	3.3960
Pound sterling	5.4855	5.6720	5.55
French franc	0.5912	0.8008	0.58
Japanese yen (100)	2.9088	2.9553	2.85
Dutch guilder	1.7718	1.8004	1.74
Swiss franc	2.3922	2.4312	2.35
Swedish krona	0.4498	0.4508	0.43
Norwegian krona	0.4775	0.4853	0.46
Danish krone	0.5229	0.5314	0.51
Finnish mark	0.5594	0.5604	0.46
Canadian dollar	2.4468	0.8701	0.84
Australian dollar	2.5839	2.6256	2.53
S. African rand	0.7533	0.7656	0.68
Belgian franc (10)	0.9847	0.9903	0.84
Austrian schilling (10)	2.8304	2.8761	2.78
Italian lira (1000)	2.0209	2.03	2.03
Jordanian dinar	4.7815	4.8282	4.89
Egyptian pound	0.9800	1.0400	0.98
ECU	3.8828	3.9455	3.81
Irish punt	5.0937	5.1739	5.01
Spanish peseta (100)	2.9820	2.4001	2.44

*These rates vary according to bank. **Bank of Israel.
SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

Key Representative Rates	
US Dollar	NIS 3.3980
Swiss Franc	NIS 5.5306
Mark	NIS 2.0093

Lebanese growth rate slows to five-year low

BEIRUT (Reuters) - A leading Beirut bank signalled yesterday that Lebanon's economic growth fell in the first quarter of 1997 to its lowest level since billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Hariri took office nearly five years ago.

Banque Audi said in its quarterly economic report that growth fell not only below the four percent annual rate recorded last year but also below the 3% registered in the first quarter of 1996.

"Growth in the first quarter of 1997 slowed down significantly in terms of annual rates, it fell from the 4% reported in 1996,"

the report said. "Internal sources of growth appeared to have run dry. Consumption was sluggish and investment fell."

In a break with its usual practice, Banque Audi did not give a figure for first quarter growth. However, it referred to "relative stagnation" in comparison with the first quarter of 1996, when it reported growth at 3%.

A rate of less than 3% would be the lowest Lebanon has experienced since Hariri took over in October 1992, with a mandate to rebuild the country after the 1975-90 civil war.

It would compare with a growth target of 10% a year set in Hariri's multi-billion dollar reconstruction program.

According to Banque Audi, estimated GDP growth was 8% in 1994, 7% in 1995 and 4% in 1996.

Banque Audi said sluggish consumption and disappointing demand in the first quarter resulted from "depression in the political and business environments" and the cumulative effects of the government's adjustment policies.

Industry continued to sell off

stocks and investment fell, it said. "Compared to the first quarter of 1996, both public and private investment decreased, according to our estimates, by almost 14% in nominal value, thus negatively affecting growth and confirming the slowing down of activity."

Other negative indicators included a continued decline in the growth of bank loans to the private sector and deterioration of the state's debt ratios.

Banque Audi also cited a 59.67% budget deficit in the first quarter, compared with a planned shortfall of 36%.

Roche purchases Boehringer Mannheim in \$11b. deal

ZURICH (Reuters) - Swiss pharmaceuticals group Roche Holding Ltd yesterday announced plans to acquire the diagnostics and pharmaceuticals company Boehringer Mannheim Group in a deal valued at \$11 billion.

It said the move would make Roche the market leader in the global diagnostics business.

The agreement calls for Roche to purchase all the shares of Bermuda-based Corange Ltd, the sole owner of the diagnostics and pharmaceuticals business of Boehringer Mannheim Group.

Corange also holds 84.2 percent of shares in DePuy, Inc., a Delaware-based manufacturer of orthopedic products.

Roche said in a statement that it entered into the agreement with the owners of Corange on May 24.

The acquisition must still be approved by the relevant regulatory authorities, Roche said in its statement.

"This acquisition enables Roche to attain yet another of its strategic goals, to become a leader in the diagnostics systems and products sector in terms of sales and profitability," Roche Chairman Fritz Gerber said in the statement.

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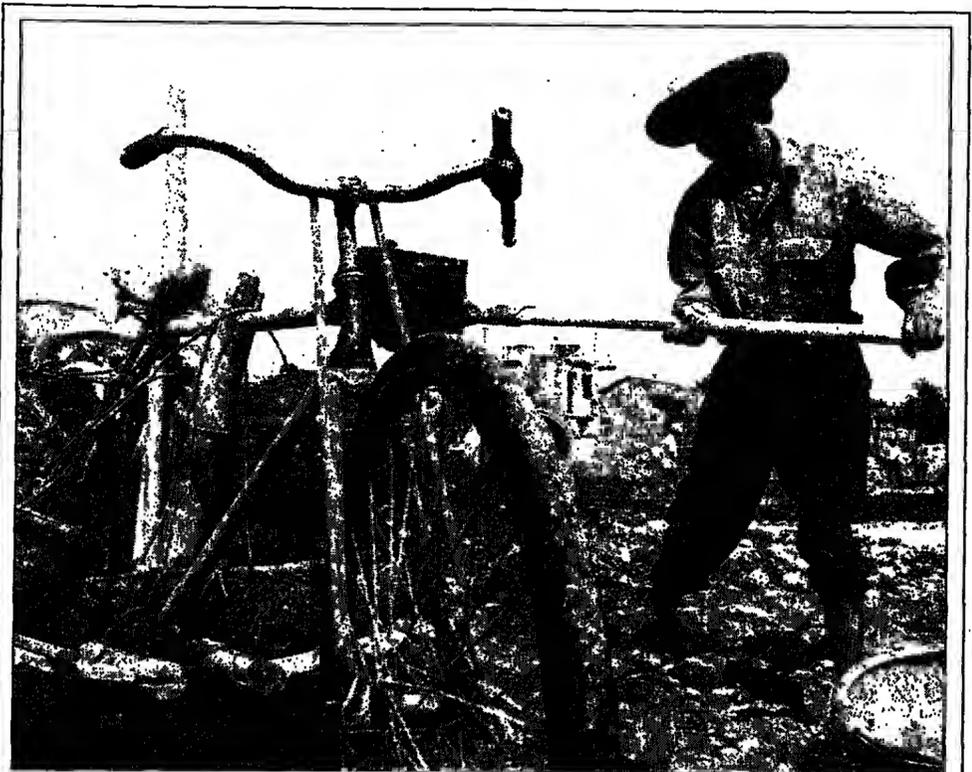
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World Bank pledges \$24.8 million to upgrade Hanoi road system
 A Vietnamese laborer loads sacks full of gravel on a downtown Hanoi roadside. The World Bank has pledged \$24.8 million to upgrade the capital's shabby road system and restore order to its treacherous streets, where more than 1,500 have already died this year.

New UK trade chief in Japan for car talks

TOKYO (Reuters) - Britain's new trade chief Margaret Beckett, choosing Japan for her first foreign trip since the Labor Party won power, yesterday plunged into the competition for Japanese carmakers' business in Europe.

On the first day of a three-day visit, Beckett met the heads of Toyota, Honda and Nissan and beat the drum for her new Britain as a gateway for Japanese companies into the European market.

British officials said neither the carmakers nor Beckett had specific proposals to consider and the meetings were more to lay the groundwork for a comfortable trade relationship between Japan and the new Labor government.

"Beckett was keen to stress that there is a strong relationship between Britain and Japan and we want that to continue," one official said.

However the underlying message was that Labor was strongly committed to a European single market and the days of a threat to Britain being used as a manufacturing base for Europe from "Euro-sceptic" conservatives were over.

New Zealand's Fernz deals Rhone-Poulenc strategic blow

By MATTHEW BROCKETT

WELLINGTON (Reuters) - New Zealand's Fernz Corporation has dealt French chemicals goliath Rhone-Poulenc a strategic blow in a battle for control of a burgeoning agri-chemicals market, managing director Kerry Hoggard said.

Hoggard said yesterday he expects Rhone-Poulenc will probably sell its 32 percent stake in industrial chemicals group Compagnie Francaise des Produits Industriels (CFPI) after Fernz bought the founding Hess family's shares last week.

Buying the strategic 17% stake took Fernz's total equity holding in CFPI to 45.14%, and Hoggard said he did not believe Rhone-Poulenc would now retain its minority holding.

"I don't think either company is in a situation where they're going to sit there with a minority position on a long-term basis," he said.

Fernz intends to launch a takeover bid for the remaining shares at FR 380 per share. The offer values all of CFPI at NZ\$139 million (US\$96m.). Rhone-Poulenc indicated as

recently as last November it was interested in taking control of CFPI. While it is still possible for Rhone to make a counterbid, Hoggard was confident Fernz will secure control of CFPI at its offer price.

Fernz has been wrestling Rhone, the seventh largest pharmaceutical and chemical group in the world, for control of CFPI because it is the key to the international market for agricultural chemical bromoxynil.

Bromoxynil is used as a herbicide to protect small and coarse grains. Rhone supplies about 80% of the bromoxynil market worldwide, and a takeover of CFPI, which holds the remaining 20%, would have given it total control of the product.

That could have had implications for Fernz, because it supplies 80% of the world market for MCPA, another agricultural chemical which is used almost exclusively in conjunction with bromoxynil, Hoggard explained.

If Fernz succeeded in taking control of CFPI it would be in a stronger position to work with Rhone to distribute sales of both products.

Hoggard said Fernz had identified CFPI as a takeover target 12

TASE ROUNDUP

Drop expected today after rates left unchanged

Mishtanim	Maof
271.14 ▲ 0.03%	279.42 ▲ 0.03%

By ROBERT DANIEL

Stock indexes were little changed as investors waited to see if the Bank of Israel cut interest rates, which would reduce corporate borrowing costs and make stocks more attractive relative to interest rate-linked investments.

After the market closed, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frankel announced that the central bank would leave its benchmark rate at 13.9 percent. Analysts, who had expected either a cut of as much as 0.3 percentage point or no change, said prices on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange would drop tomorrow.

"People will sell [today], but [the decision] won't influence things dramatically," said Gidi Halpern, a portfolio manager at Tel Aviv investment firm Meitav Ltd. "The market is very strong, and the interest rate decision won't affect specific companies which are going up."

The Maof index of 25 most-traded issues rose 0.03 percent to 279.42, and the Mishtanim index of 100 issues also added 0.03% to 271.14. Both indexes are at record levels.

Declining shares included Bank Leumi, the second-largest bank by assets, and Blue Square Investments and Properties Ltd., a supermarket operator, down 2% and 2.5% to 5.29 and 37.78 respectively.

Gainers included holding companies Clal Industries Ltd. and Koor Industries Ltd., up 2.25% and 2.75% to 305.76 and 18.06. Investors are watching "three

major events this week," said Ron Weisberg, analyst at Israel Brokerage and Investments. They are the central bank's rate decision, the government's sale of Bank Leumi shares, and expirations of options on the Maof index Thursday.

There's pressure on Bank Leumi's people to wait to see how the offering will go," said Dan Alt, a broker at Tel Aviv firm Nesuah Trading.

The most-active issue was Bank Leumi, trading NIS 11.3m. of shares.

Across the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, NIS 123.6m. of shares traded. Six issues rose for every five that declined.

Bank Hapoalim, also high on the government's list of holdings it wants to shed, was unchanged at 7.11.

Discount Bank slipped 0.75% to 3.68 as it reported first-quarter net income fell 5.8%.

Koor, which has interests in building materials, telecommunications equipment, said it is considering increasing a planned bond issue by 50% to \$300m.

Clal Industries, with investments in telecommunications, electronic equipment, computers and other fields, reported first-quarter net income fell 57% on 11% lower revenue.

Developer Azorim Investment, Development & Construction Co. slipped 0.25% as it reported first-quarter profit fell 4.5% on 4.3% higher revenue.

Department-store chain Shekhem Ltd. was unchanged at 1.205. (Bloomberg)

WORLD MARKET ROUNDUP

Tokyo shares end up

TOKYO - Tokyo stocks closed marginally higher yesterday, helped by buying of a limited number of issues, backed partly by solid corporate earnings reports. Market participants were still cautious over the currency market and Wall Street stocks.

The 225-share Nikkei average gained 34.50 points to finish the session at 20,043.50.

HONG KONG - Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index soared to a record closing high on record turnover as overseas money continued to flow in looking to snap up big cap stocks and

red chips. The blue-chip index rose 242.96 points to close at 14,574.64, a touch off the intra-day high of 14,581.35.

FRANKFURT - German shares shrugged off early nerves following the unexpected left-wing victory in the French parliamentary elections to surge to fresh record highs in bourse trade, albeit on thin volumes.

The blue chip DAX index surged past old records to end the bourse session up 55.67 points at 3,657.86 points. In post-bourse trade the DAX stood at 3,669.31 up 47.59 points.

WHERE TO GO

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Museums
 TEL AVIV MUSEUM, Andrea Serrano: The Morgue. Soviet Photography from the Museum collection. Lubian Freud: selection of works. Tzvi Hecker: Sunflower. Portraits: By a group of Israeli artists. Virtual Reality: The domestic and realistic in contemporary Israeli art. HELENA RUBINSTEIN PAVILION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, Shlomo Ben-David and Anon Ben-David. The Invented Campaign. Hours: Weekdays 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Tue. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Fri. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Meyerhoff Art Education Center, Tel. 8919156-8.

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Rafanana-Kfar Sava: Kupat Holim Meosabil, 49 Hehuyil, Rafanana, 740-7788.

Netanya: Center Pharm, 1 King David, 884-1531.

Haifa: Hanassi, 33 Hanassi, 833-3312.

Krayot area: Pentagon, 4 Hagdud Harvi, Krayot Meotzin, 871-1490.

Herzliya: Clal Pharm, Beit Herzliya, 6 Maskil (nr. Sdrot Hagdalim), Herzliya Pituah, 955-9472, 955-8407, Open 9 a.m. to midnight.

Upper Nazareth: Clal Pharm, Lev He's Mail, 857-0468, Open 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.

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Rishon LeZion 956-98112, Haifa 887-2222, Beer Sheva 848-4333, Netanya 882-5110, Karmiel 888-8770, Kfar Sava 767-4555, Hadera 834-6780, Crispa Center for Religious Women 02-555-5744/5, 24-hour service, confidentiality guaranteed.

Wizo hotlines for battered women 02-6514111, 03-546-1133 (also in Russian), 07-637-6310, 08-965-0506 (also in Aramaic).

Rape Crisis Center (24 hours), Tel Aviv 523-4819, 544-9181 (Hebrew), Jerusalem 825-5658, Haifa 853-0533, Eilat 833-1977.

Hadassah Medical Organization - Israel Cancer Association support service 02-624-7878).

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LAST	CHANGE		LAST	CHANGE	
Chal Israel 1	108.5	0.5	KDC	1822.0	1.2
Chal Israel 2	1128.0	8.7	Net Nigra	539.0	0.0
Chal Israel 3	8918.0	0.0	Israel Chemicals	395.0	0.0
Dead Sea Works 0.1	1140.0	2.0	Israel Corp. 1	20599.0	0.5
Dead Sea Works 0.2	10710.0	0.8	Israel Corp. 2	8714.0	-1.0
Delek 0.1	540.0	0.0	Jermanco	3.8	0.0
Delek 0.2	42.8	0.2	JSC	1885.0	1.0
Development Mort	27878.0	0.8	Kardian 5	193.0	0.0
Discount 0.1	82.8	0.0	Koor Bond 5	479.8	2.8
Discount 0.2	99725.0	-0.2	Koor Bond 6	30576.0	2.3
Elbit	893.0	1.0	Koor Bond 7	198.0	0.0
Elbit Systems	2042.0	0.2	Leumi Insurance	228.0	0.4
Elcom	3380.0	4.0	Leumi Mortgage	89262.0	2.2
Elcom App	2621.0	0.7	Malibu 5	2791.0	4.0
Elcom App 2	4827.0	0.2	Masbia 5	2066.0	0.0
Elcom App 3	15948.0	-0.3	Masbia 6	1948.0	-0.5
Elcom App 4	2621.0	0.7	Masbia 7	2106.0	0.0
Elcom App 5	4827.0	0.2	Masbia 8	2066.0	0.0
Elcom App 6	15948.0	-0.3	Masbia 9	2106.0	0.0
Elcom App 7	2621.0	0.7	Masbia 10	2066.0	0.0
Elcom App 8	4827.0	0.2	Masbia 11	2106.0	0.0
Elcom App 9	15948.0	-0.3	Masbia 12	2066.0	0.0
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SPORTS

in brief

Crystal Palace promoted to premier league

LONDON (Reuters) - Crystal Palace will play in the English premier league next season after they beat Sheffield United 1-0 (halftime 0-0) in the first division promotion play-off final at Wembley yesterday.

David Hopkins scored the winning goal in the 90th minute in front of a crowd of 64,383.

Canadiens name Vigneault as new head coach

MONTREAL (Reuters) - The Montreal Canadiens yesterday named Alain Vigneault their new head coach and hired former Calgary Flames coach Dave King as his top assistant.

Canadiens general manager Rejean Houle announced that former junior league head coach Vigneault had signed a three-year contract for the most pressure-packed post in the National Hockey League.

The Canadiens, the most successful team in the history of the NHL with 23 championships, have not won a playoff series since winning the Stanley Cup in 1993.

Woodsnam wins British PGA by two strokes

WENTWORTH, England (Reuters) - Ian Woodsnam of Britain overcame a faltering start before settling down on the back nine to win the British PGA title with a two-under-par final round of 70 yesterday.

The Welsh Ryder Cup veteran won by two strokes for his second victory in the championship after tasting success in 1988. He also took the World Matchplay title twice on the same course in 1987 and 1990.

South African Ernie Els and Nick Faldo of Britain both birdied the final hole for rounds of 70 to create a three-way tie for second with Irishman Darren Clarke, who could only par the loog closing hole for a 71.

Ballesteros considering back operation

WENTWORTH, England (Reuters) - European Ryder Cup captain Seve Ballesteros said yesterday he may drop out of this week's Tournament Players Championship because of a sore back and might even consider surgery.

Ballesteros, who withdrew from this weekend's British PGA Championship at Wentworth before the start of Friday's second round said he would make a decision on the Hamburg tournament later this week.

Dropping out of the PGA had already cost the 40-year-old Spaniard the chance of a lucrative haul of Ryder Cup points in his bid to be the playing captain in the September match against the Americans at Valderrama.

Nastase, Tiriac given key federation posts

BUCHAREST (Reuters) - Ilie Nastase and Ion Tiriac, Romania's top two tennis players in the 1970s, have been given key posts in the country's tennis federation.

"Romanian tennis wants Nastase and Tiriac as its main decision men... to help rebuild a powerful set-up in our country," federation general secretary Lucian Vasiliu said yesterday.

Nastase has been chosen as the federation's executive president, while Tiriac was elected as honorary president for life.

Almost half of Bundesliga may play in Europe

BÖNN (Reuters) - Almost half of the German first division could be playing to European club competitions next season.

Newly-crowned champions Bayern Munich and second-placed Bayer Leverkusen secured their places in the Champions' League in a decisive round of action at the weekend.

At the moment European Cup finalists Borussia Dortmund, VfB Stuttgart, Bochum and defending champions Schalke will play in the UEFA Cup.

If Stuttgart win the German Cup final and Dortmund clinch this week's European Cup final, the teams in sixth and seventh places in the 18-strong Bundesliga - presently 1860 Munich and Karlsruhe with one game remaining - will take their UEFA Cup places.

Dortmund would then play in the Champions' League and Stuttgart in the European Cup Winners' Cup.

Rain postpones Indianapolis 500 again

INDIANAPOLIS (Reuters) - For the second successive day, the 81st running of the Indianapolis 500 was postponed after heavy rain soaked the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

The race, which was originally scheduled for Sunday, did get underway on Monday, but was halted after 15 of the 200 laps had been run.

After a rain delay of some three hours, the decision was made to again postpone the race until tomorrow at noon, weather permitting.

Hap. Beersheba wrest State Cup from Maccabi Tel Aviv

By DEREK FATTAL

Hapoel Beersheba captured the State Cup for the first time in its history last night with a hard-fought 1-0 victory over Maccabi Tel Aviv at the National Stadium in Ramat Gan.

There was precious little constructive football on display for the 25,000 crowd, but nevertheless the game was decided by a single moment of brilliance. It came three minutes before half-time when Beersheba's man-of-the-match, Giovanni Rosset, met a well-flighted corner with a startling overhead kick that carted off the far post and into goal.

The result salvaged Beersheba's season, and takes the club into its third-ever venture into Europe, by way of a place in the preliminary rounds of the Cup Winners' Cup.

Meanwhile Maccabi supporters will be left pondering through the summer how their side has fallen from its double-winning success to relative ignominy in just twelve short months.

Both sides stressed defense over attack, and

the southerners clearly maintained the upper hand throughout as their central unit of Alexander Solov and Sharon Buchnik met every assault that Avi Nimni and his cohorts tried to mount, with a wall of steel.

The Tel Avivians, usually need little firing up on the big occasion, but on the night Avraham Grant's men simply failed to get their game together as the Beershebans challenged in every meter of the field making even simple pass options difficult for the former Cup-holders.

The first scare for Maccabi came in the tenth minute when a crafty pass by Stadi Halilovic sent Liron Bassis tearing towards goal only to be stopped in his tracks when Tel Aviv goalkeeper Alexander Obarov dived at his feet. The Beersheba players could hardly contain themselves when referee Amit Klein dismissed their penalty appeals but Klein was in good position to make a correct judgment.

Ten minutes later, the southerners had the good fortune to see a Gadi Brumer screamer

released from over 30 meters from goal shave the crossbar and fly off to safety.

As the first half wore on, Hapoel's self-confidence increased as Shai Holtzman stretched and pulled the Tel Aviv defense out of position.

When it came, Beersheba's goal was certainly the result of lax defending by Maccabi, but its wonderful execution fully entitled the Cup to be taken back to the Negev.

Once the goal was under their belts, Beersheba's confidence grew. A string of substitutions during the second half by both teams did little to change the balance of power. Tel Aviv's sense of desperation was etched in the face of veteran Nir Klingner which seemed to acknowledge his own impotency against the barrage of tackles that met him every time he sought to close in on the Beersheba area.

A mess in the Beersheba area in the 88th minute almost let in Maccabi's Ofer Mizrahi, but his diving header skewed over Avi Peretz's bar. At the other end substitute Oren Sagron had an opportunity to make it 2-0 seconds

before the final whistle.

The final moments of the game were symbolized by Radio Darwin's commentator Moshe Nir. Sporting an authentic Barcelona FC hat, his commentary to the few Negev souls who could not get to the game or even in front of a television set bordered on the hysterical, particularly when Beersheba captain Shavit Elumlech went up to collect the glittering trophy from President Ezer Weizman.

The irony was clear. Beersheba being the team which annihilated Beersheba 12-0 on aggregate in their last European sortie two seasons ago. That identity was finally erased yesterday, the day the out-of-towners came to the big Orange and left with the spoils and the chance of another continental flight.

Teams: Hapoel Beersheba: Eli Peretz, Gadi Hamed, Alexander Solov, Sharon Buchnik, Shimon Elton, Giora Rosset, Stav Elumlech, Stadi Halilovic, Shimon Valenta, Dudu Lefen, Liron Bassis (Oren Sagron 60), Shai Holtzman (Sharon Avital 72). Maccabi Tel Aviv: Alexander Havaon, Amir Shishit, Gadi Brumer, Alon Brumer, Guy Nachman, Nir Klingner, Natan Shoshan, Avi Nimni, Haim Hataj (Guy Peled 82), Ofer Mizrahi, Eli Drisk (Domagoj Kosic 82).

Sampras at home as European rivals stutter in Paris

PARIS (Reuters) - Europe's long list of clay court specialists were upstaged by world No. 1 Pete Sampras yesterday as the French Open unfolded in some intriguing directions at a sun-baked Roland Garros.

Top seed Sampras gave one of the most authoritative displays of his up-and-down career on clay to beat local hope Fabrice Santoro 6-3, 7-5, 6-1, a performance which suggests he could yet collect the only grand slam title he has not won.

The American openly admits the slower surface remains a struggle for him but, ironically, spent the tournament's first day looking much more at home than several of his rivals with supposedly genuine feet of clay.

Thomas Muster, once the undisputed "King of Clay" and French champion two years ago, was pushed to the brink of first-round disaster by Germany's Marc Kevin Goellner, only to squeeze through 4-6, 7-6, 6-2, 6-7, 6-4 after trailing 4-2 in the final set.

There was no escape, however, for Alberto Berasategui of Spain, a finalist in 1994 and seeded 12th this time. He was forced to retire in the fifth set of his match against Andrei Medvedev with cramp, while another of the so-called "Spanish Armada" Carlos Moya also had a rougher-than-expected time.

The ninth seed, a finalist at this year's Australian Open, was locked at two sets all with compatriot Alberto Martin when bad light halted play for the day, leaving him facing a struggle to justify his pre-tournament status as one of the men to watch.

Any complacency amongst the clay-court experts had long since been swept away by Sampras who was ultimately able to make an awkward-looking match appear relatively simple.

Santoro had beaten recent French champions Thomas Muster and



IN HER STRIDE - Mary Pierce beat Tatiana Panova of Russia 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 and was then jeered off court by the Roland Garros crowd, who have found it difficult to get to like the Frenchwoman.

Sergi Bruguera this year but was never allowed into his stride by an opponent who did not look like a player without a prior win on clay this year.

A big crowd indicated what French spectators thought might happen but once Sampras had taken the first set in 32 minutes he grew steadily in confidence and gave his opponent no room for manoeuvre. The only real wobble came in the eighth game when a nifty backhand gave the 57th-ranked Santoro a break point for 5-3 but his failure to take advantage cost him dear.

Defending champion Yevgeny Kafelnikov, back after missing three months of the year with a broken finger, expressed cautious optimism following his 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 success over Martin Damm of the Czech Republic.

The basing center court crowd were so quiet the Russian was unsure if they knew who he was but the third seed is determined to remind them of his talents in the coming days.

"I was looking in a magazine yesterday and saw my chances rated at two percent," smiled Kafelnikov. "I

just want to prove I'm not as bad as everyone thinks."

In the women's singles, three-time French champion Monica Seles attracted only five reporters to her post-match news conference after beating Japan's Miho Saeki 6-0, 6-3, an indication of the shift in power in the women's game since Martina Hingis's emergence.

The love-hate relationship between Mary Pierce and her French public also took an unexpected turn when she was jeered off court after a scrambled 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 win over Russian Tatiana Panova.

"I don't notice things like that any more. I play for myself and I consider this event just like any other tournament," sniffed Pierce.

Sixteen-year-old American Venus Williams enjoyed herself much more, making a striking impression on her French Open debut.

Despite a shimmering silver tennis dress and strings of white-beaded braids, Venus seemed destined to vanish from sight when she lost a second set tie-break to Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu.

Instead, she dug in to win 6-2, 6-7, 7-5 in two hours 37 minutes.

Flyers beat Rangers to earn Stanley Cup Finals berth

PHILADELPHIA (Reuters) - Rod Brind'Amour scored twice, including the go-ahead goal, to return the Philadelphia Flyers to the Stanley Cup Finals for the first time in a

decade with a 4-2 victory over the New York Rangers Sunday.

Eric Lindros and John LeClair added power-play tallies for the Flyers, who won the last three games to take the best-of-seven Eastern Conference finals 4-1. Philadelphia will play the winner of the Western Conference series between Colorado and Detroit in the Stanley Cup Finals.

Goalie Ron Hextall, who won the Conn Smythe Trophy during the Flyers' last trip to the Stanley Cup Finals in 1987, turned aside 17 shots. He won the first three contests after replacing Garth Snow in the second period of Game 2.

The veteran Rangers were game but outstayed by the Flyers, and crippled by injury throughout the series.

"Injuries did us in," said Rangers coach Colin Campbell.

"The team that stays healthy makes it to the championship. We didn't stay healthy and the Flyers did." Asked when he knew the Rangers were in trouble, Campbell said: "Probably before the game started when Brian Leetch skated out after receiving a needle. Bruce Driver, Doug Lidster and Wayne (Gretzky) all received needles." Brind'Amour capped a wild first period when he grabbed a loose puck in the low slot, faked Mike Richter and slid a backhander between the goaltender's pads for his ninth playoff goal.

Philadelphia limited the Rangers to two shots in the second period, then dodged a bullet early in the third when Gretzky came out from behind the net and flicked a backhander off the right goalpost.

Brind'Amour got his fourth goal of the series at 6:43 to provide the Flyers with insurance. He won a faceoff deep in the Rangers' zone and fed the puck back to Chris Therien at the left point. Richter got his left pad on Therien's slap shot, but Brind'Amour chipped in the rebound to make it 4-2.

LOCAL SCENE

Amit Inbar in fine fettle

By HEATHER CHAIT

Amit Inbar is making his comeback. Inbar, pushed out of the limelight by Olympic medalist Gal Friedman, won an international windsurfing competition in the Netherlands this week.

Inbar's results in his nine sails were 3, 3, 1, 1, 2, 1, 12, 11 and 7 which gave him the gold medal.

The new Inbar, addicted to yoga and a strict diet after his trip to India, has now qualified for the world and European windsurfing championships.

Basketball: The national women's basketball team has reached next year's semi-finals of the European Championships, even after losing their last game 68-65 in the preliminary rounds to hosts Portugal.

In the last game, Israel had to lose by no more than 17 points to advance as the second place finisher, along with first placed Croatia. During the tournament Israel lost to Croatia 85-72 but won the other games, against the Netherlands, Switzerland and Ireland.

Athletics: Triple-jumper Avi Teyrie, now over last year's injury, is hungry for action. At his first competition this year at Hadar Yosef on the weekend, he jumped the minimum distance for the world championships in Athens in August.

Teyrie's jump was 16.94 meters,

10 centimeters more than the minimum requirement. Rogel Nahum, already assured of his ticket to Athens, also jumped 16.94.

In the pole vault event, where Israel also has two international athletes, Danny Krasnov managed 5.30m while Konstantin Simyonev settled for 5.40m.

Tali Greener smashed the women's pole vault distance no less than three times in one meet. Her previous record which had stood at 3.20m, went to 3.26m, then 3.30m and landed at 3.35m.

Golf: This week's competition at Caesarea Golf Club was an alliance best-ball stableford. Helping Cyril Kaufman to win with a 15 better than par, 121 strokes, were his wife Norma, and his brother, Basil, together with Judy Reefe.

Four strokes behind were Leslie Ben-Amir, Dick Fogelson and Mike and Mimi Bannister. Eight players tied for third place on 116 strokes.

These were the team of Harold Stutzen, Lou Zinn, Solly Friedman and Eli Gitlin and the foursome of Jacob Deutsch, Yair Keren, Amos Amir and Moshe Zarkover.

Coming up on May 29, 30 and June 3-6 are the club championships.

Tennis: After eight matches in the league, Hapoel Ironi Lod A is leading with 23 points but Ironi Ramle is just one point behind and has a game in hand. In third place is ASA Tel Aviv with 21 and Elitzur Kochav Yair fills the fourth spot.

Among the weekend's matches were Ironi Ramle's 4-0 triumph over ASA Tel Aviv with Eyal Erlich, Noam Behr and Amir Hadad featuring for the victors.

This week's ATP Tour rankings show Eyal Ran at 139 (160 in doubles), Oren Motswaneh at 187, Erlich at 207, Raviv Weidenfeld at 242 and Nir Welgoren at 277.

Cycling: The whole family is invited to a five-kilometer cycle tomorrow to mark the international sports day celebrations.

Meet in Jerusalem at Yeshua Yevin 17, Nayot, to meander through the Valley of the Cross, Gan Sacher, the Israel Museum and back. Pedalling-off time is 5 p.m. Entry free.

Maccabiah minutes: The darning of the Atlanta Games, gymnast Kerry Strug, will carry the flame at the opening ceremony of the Maccabiah on July 14. Strug, who crept into people's hearts the world over when she led the American team to gold despite her injury, is unlikely to compete here but will give a demonstration.

In other news, the Youth Maccabiah has attracted 800 entrants, the largest number ever, and almost twice the number from the previous games.

The main youth attraction is expected to be netball. In all, the athletes will compete in ten disciplines with the action mostly in Zichron Ya'acov, Yokneam and the Wingate Institute.

Frost wins by two strokes as Tiger shows he's also human

FORT WORTH, Tx (Reuters) - David Frost of South Africa won for the first time in nearly three years on ed Tiger Woods victory parade faltered as the \$1.6 million Colonial golf tournament.

Frost shot a three-under-par 67 for a four-round total of 15-under 265, then sweated it out in the clubhouse as first David Ogrin, then Woods failed to catch him. It was the 10th career victory for Frost, who had been struggling this year and missed the cut at five of the nine tournaments he played.

Woods, gunning for his third successive win, fell into a fourth-place tie.

"I didn't play well all day," Woods said in a prepared statement released through tournament officials.

Overlooked and unheralded when the day started, Frost said he enjoyed playing ahead of Woods and away from most of the crowds. "I couldn't ask for a better situation myself, that's just the way I wanted it," Frost said.

Frost finished in the top 20 only once this year and wasn't even among the top 150 on the 1997 money list before capturing the \$288,000 top prize.

Sports Editors: Joseph Hoffman and Ori Lewis

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In light of bribery scandal: Ministry orders new driving tests

By Jerusalem Post Staff

All drivers who took lessons from driving teachers suspected of bribing Transport Ministry examiners in the North will be required to retake their driving tests, the ministry announced.

A ministry spokesman yesterday put the number at "between hundreds and thousands." Israel Radio reported that the ministry would only track the drivers back two years, even though the scam has apparently been going on for nearly six years. Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy on Sunday announced the suspension of all driving examiners arrested in the case.

There were two more arrests in the massive fraud case yesterday: the supervisor of driving examiners in the North, a Haifa man, 56; and the manager of a Haifa driving school, also a resident, 42. Police said investigators yesterday searched another

driving school premises in the city. As a result of the fraud case, the ministry plans to introduce a new system for licensing new drivers, whereby only those who have already passed the theory part of the driving test and a physical examination will be allowed to take driving lessons.

Individuals will have to be 17 or over to take lessons, and driving tests will be administered by private companies. Examiners currently working for the Transport Ministry will be eligible to apply for work with the private companies when their personal contracts with the ministry expire.

New drivers will receive a temporary license good for six months, after which they will have to take a "refresher course." In addition, during the first six months a new driver has a license, he or she will have to drive with an experienced driver in the car.



Police arrest one of the Union of Local Authorities protesters who blocked the road outside the Prime Minister's Office yesterday. (Brian Hender)

Beilin announces formation of 'shadow cabinet'

By SARAH HONIG

A week before the June 3 Labor leadership primary, candidate MK Yossi Beilin yesterday announced the formation of a shadow cabinet, assuming he wins.

So far, if the polls are to be trusted, MK Ehud Barak is way out front, with Beilin in second place and MKs Ephraim Sneh and Shlomo Ben-Ami barely in the race.

The pollsters' predictions notwithstanding, Beilin's announcement of a shadow cabinet also defied custom, in that shadow governments were always avoided to prevent vicious internecine prestige battles over non-existent posts.

Evincing magnanimity towards Barak, Beilin put him in the Defense Ministry, while giving old

huddy Haim Ramon Foreign Affairs. Uzi Baram, now Barak's second in command, will get the Treasury if Beilin wins, while Shlomo Ben-Ami can count on the Education portfolio. Beilin also pledged to appoint an Arab minister and said his cabinet would include two women.

However, none of the "appointments" is firm, because Beilin announced that patron Shimon Peres can have the pick of the portfolios, regardless of whose expense. Peres still has not let it be known who he endorses, if anyone.

Baram quipped that, "Yossi's offer is very generous, but I am afraid my chances of receiving this appointment from him are as slim as his chances are to win the primary."

Histadrut calls off mass strike

By DAVID HARRIS and Tim

After less than 24 hours, the Histadrut yesterday called off its strike in local authorities throughout the country.

While a court order prevented strike action in 14 cities, including Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa, all local authority services were affected in the remaining 250 councils.

The strike came to an end when Histadrut campaign head Leon Morozovsky and Union of Local Authorities chairman Adi Eldar signed an agreement whereby the ULA undertakes not to reduce employee wages, despite the mounting debts of local authorities.

At the same time, the Histadrut said it is in full sup-

port of the ULA cause.

Meanwhile, there were clashes between the police and ULA leaders, as the ULA strike enters its third week.

ULA representatives attempted to break into both the Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's Office and that of Finance Minister Dan Meridor, as the two held talks with Interior Minister Eli Shliss in an attempt to find a compromise with the ULA.

Jerusalem deputy police chief Dep.-Cmdr. Mickey Levy ordered the ULA representatives arrested. As police tried to drive them to the station, however, other ULA protesters blocked the car with their bodies and clashes broke out. Several ULA protesters were struck, pushed, and

scolded by policemen. Eldar was taken to Hadassah-University Hospital, Ein Kerem, for examination after being hit by a policeman.

Eldar said that the police were responsible for the clashes and said the ULA would lodge a complaint against Levy, who, he said, personally struck protesters and verbally abused them.

The ULA is demanding the Treasury wipe out local authority deficits, which amount to NIS 4 billion.

"Nothing new was offered, so we're carrying on our strike in 250 of the 264 local authorities," said ULA spokesman Hillel Goldstein.

On Sunday night, Prime Minister's Office Director-

General Avigdor Lieberman proposed giving the municipalities NIS 300 million this year and NIS 500m. in 1998, NIS 200m. of which would be given as a loan this year.

There will be no council services in the 250 municipalities, with the exception of education, refuse collection, and emergency services.

The 600 public sector psychologists also on strike reported that a little progress was made in their negotiations on pay and conditions with the Treasury, Civil Service Commission, and Kupaat Holim Clalit.

Three psychologists were arrested during protests at the universities in the major cities, after they interfered with traffic.

WEATHER

Haifa 19-25	Tiberias 19-27
Afula 17-20	Samartha 19-27
Tel Aviv 18-26	Jerusalem 17-26
Bersheba 17-26	Dead Sea 22-28
Eilat 22-28	

Forecast: Pleasant

AROUND THE WORLD

	LOW	HIGH	P
Amsterdam	10	16	cloudy
Berlin	12	17	cloudy
Buenos Aires	11	14	clear
Caracas	11	25	clear
Chicago	11	25	clear
Copenhagen	11	15	cloudy
Frankfurt	11	17	cloudy
Geneva	11	17	cloudy
Helsinki	11	17	cloudy
Hong Kong	23	27	clear
Los Angeles	18	24	clear
London	10	16	cloudy
Madrid	14	22	clear
Moscow	11	17	cloudy
Munich	11	17	cloudy
New York	18	24	clear
Paris	11	17	cloudy
Rome	10	16	clear
Stockholm	11	17	cloudy
Sydney	15	20	clear
Tokyo	15	24	clear
Toronto	10	16	cloudy
Warsaw	10	16	cloudy
Zurich	11	17	cloudy

Winning cards

In yesterday's daily Chance drawings, the winning cards were the king of spades, ace of hearts, 8 of diamonds, and 8 of clubs, and the ace of spades, king of hearts, 10 of diamonds, and jack of clubs.

Burglary takes Virtual Jerusalem offline

By JUDY SIEGEL

Computer companies fight a never-ending battle against viruses, software pirates, and industrial espionage. But sometimes they are knocked for a loop by ordinary burglars.

Virtual Jerusalem, a major Israeli Internet site that is the home base for hundreds of companies and organizations offering information, found itself virtually speechless when thieves in New York stole its computer servers over the weekend.

Coming a few days before the company's first anniversary and gearing up for the marking of Jerusalem Day, the burglary caused much work both in Jerusalem's Talpiot section and New York to restore the information on the site. It had closed down for a few days and informed would-be users that it was having "temporary technical difficulties."

"Our computer equipment, some pieces worth as much as \$20,000, was stolen from an office we share with one or two companies in Nanuet, near Monsey, New York," commented David Kahn, a Virtual Jerusalem vice president. "We have backup, but it takes time to put it back together."

Kahn dismissed the idea that the break-in was the work of industrial spies, as the hardware and software of the firm's office mates were also hauled away.

Smoking to be banned on many El Al, Arkia, Sun D'Or flights

By JUDY SIEGEL

Transport Minister Yitzhak Levy yesterday announced his intention to bar smoking on Israeli airline flights up to five hours long, as a year-long experiment.

He has asked El Al, Arkia, and the charter-flight subsidiary Sun D'Or to present detailed plans for gradual limitation and then halting of smoking on commercial flights. Smoking is now barred on flights up to two hours long.

Levy's action came a few days before the deadline set by the High Court of Justice, which last year heard a suit by El Al stewards and a frequent passenger demanding the end to on-board smoking.

The plaintiffs argued that air inside aircraft is merely recycled and not cleaned, and that no-

smoking sections do not prevent contaminated air from smoking sections from reaching them. The stewards argued that their health was endangered by constant exposure to tobacco smoke, forcing them to choose between working and good health.

The court had instructed the transport minister to set up a committee of experts to examine the question. It heard testimony in favor of a smoking prohibition from the Israel Cancer Association, the Israel Society for the Prevention of Smoking, and the Health and Environment ministries, and against from the airlines and the Dubek tobacco company.

Last year, the International Civil Aviation Organization passed a resolution calling on member

nations to bar smoking on all commercial flights entering or leaving their country. So far, Canada and Australia have carried it out.

Levy said that if, within three months, the three firms do not present detailed plans to him, he will consider the unilateral establishment of new regulations to bar smoking on their flights.

Levy instructed Civil Aviation Administration director Menahem Sharon to work towards the signing of mutual agreements of understanding to neutralize the factor in competition and profits that would allow foreign companies to benefit by not abiding by regulations affecting local airlines.

El Al spokesman Nahman Kleiman said it would use the three months to consider the decision and present its views to Levy.

"We will say that prohibiting smoking on our flights could harm our marketing efforts, and some determined smokers could patronize other airlines because of a smoking ban on El Al," he said, adding that it would be easier if all airlines flying to Israel prohibited smoking.

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